



*Virginia  
Wildlife*

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# Virginia Wildlife

*Dedicated to the Conservation of  
Virginia's Wildlife and Related Natural Resources  
and to the Betterment of  
Outdoor Recreation in Virginia*

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PUBLICATION OFFICE: Commission of Game and Inland Fisheries, 7 North Second St., Richmond 13, Va.

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## NOVEMBER

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**COVER:** The ruffed grouse, or "mountain pheasant," was once abundant throughout Virginia but is now generally restricted to the mountain areas. It is one game species on which there is a uniform statewide open hunting season: November 20-January 31. Photo by Hugh Halliday from National Audubon Society.

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## GUEST EDITORIAL

### Give Thanks For The Harvest

NOVEMBER is the month in which Thanksgiving Day occurs, but the sportsman's cause for thankfulness is not confined to any one month or day. He has reason to "give thanks for the harvest" all year round.

The American outdoorsman is the luckiest sportsman of all. While he may not have access to such bountiful supplies of game and fish as the natives in countries of tropical and semitropical climate, he does have comparatively easy approach to a reasonable supply and a goodly variety of both that can provide far more recreational hours than his busy every-day life allows. Furthermore, his freedom of movement is pretty much what he makes it. True, increased population and reduced available acreage have made necessary the imposition of season, bag and creel limits in order to preserve seed for future harvests, but even so the average American sportsman has more hunting and fishing opportunities than his work or business will permit him to handle.

Further, his right to own and bear firearms is unhampered, although this Constitution-born privilege is the constant target of some ill-advised groups. In this regard he has been fairly capable of taking care of himself for he has come to realize that he must be ever on guard against possible encroachment of this precious liberty. His freedom of action in openly and successfully fighting such activities contrary to the American way of life is a privilege denied would-be nimrods in Communist-dominated countries. These unfortunates cannot hunt because they are not allowed to possess firearms.

A place to hunt and fish for the American sportsman? Sure, if he'll practice the high ethics of sportsmanship and make friends with the landowner who in reality is the custodian of most of our upland game. In some areas, lands and waters have been set aside for hunting and fishing purposes, and there is still much privately-owned acreage that is open to the pleasure of the sportsman. That situation does not exist in many foreign countries where hunting can only be enjoyed by the privileged few.

In this country, the sports of hunting and fishing know no class distinction. The chap who is the best shot, can cast the most effective lure or has the best hunting dog ranks high in the respect and affection of his fellow outdoorsmen, provided, of course, that he conducts himself as a sportsman should. No matter whether he is a member of the "one-gallus" clan or has his pockets stuffed with century notes, he's accepted on one basis only—sportsmanship. And, brother, there's a lot in that for which to be thankful.

This season when you tumble a high flying duck from the blue, drop a zooming game bird before he reaches cover, or crumple an antlered monarch in his tracks, pause a moment before you congratulate yourself—and give thanks for the harvest. And do your share to keep it coming year after year.

—HENRY P. DAVIS  
Remington Arms Co., Inc.

## LETTERS

### Mt. Rogers Scenic Area Set Up

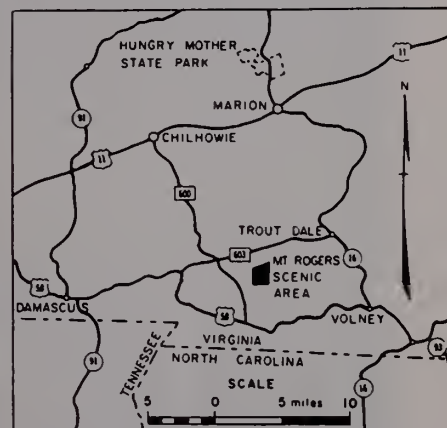
I AM pleased to announce that Hamilton K. Pyles, Regional Forester, has signed the order establishing the Mount Rogers Scenic Area.

The area, as established by the order, comprises approximately 1,300 acres and is bounded on the north, east, and south by U. S. property lines, and on the west by an unimproved road, U. S. property lines and Grassy Branch. The entire summit of Mount Rogers, supporting spruce and fir and the northern hardwood forest on the northern slopes, is within the area.

I sincerely hope that the area will serve the purpose for which it is intended—an outdoor laboratory for study and a scenic area for enjoyment.

W. C. Curnutt  
Forest Supervisor  
Jefferson National Forest  
Roanoke, Virginia

*The location of Mount Rogers, the highest point in Virginia, is shown on the map below. Established in March on the Jefferson forest was the 1,543-acre Mountain Lake Scenic Area, site of the University of Virginia's biological station in Giles County.—Ed.*



### More Cover Users

OUR entire family (5 in number) enjoys VIRGINIA WILDLIFE, and I too use both the articles and covers in my classroom. May I suggest to Mrs. Witten (LETTERS, September) that the tiles may be covered by mounting several on one bulletin board with one over the upper left-hand corner of the other, then displaying in large letters across the top "Our Wildlife," "Virginia Wildlife" or any suitable caption. Our school art teacher complimented us on our use of the materials, and I'm sure my seventh grade Social Studies class enjoyed it.

Delia W. Wills  
Orange Elementary School  
Orange, Virginia

I AGREE with Mrs. Witten whose letter appeared in the September issue of your magazine. Your cover pictures are always excellent and certainly of real value in wildlife education work.

Royston R. Rudolph  
Decatur, Georgia



# GAME TO WASTE

By JOSEPH P. LINDUSKA



Commission Photo by Kesteloo

We have a wide margin for liberalizing hunting, through season lengthening and improvement of hunter access, before we overtake the productive capacity of most species of resident game.

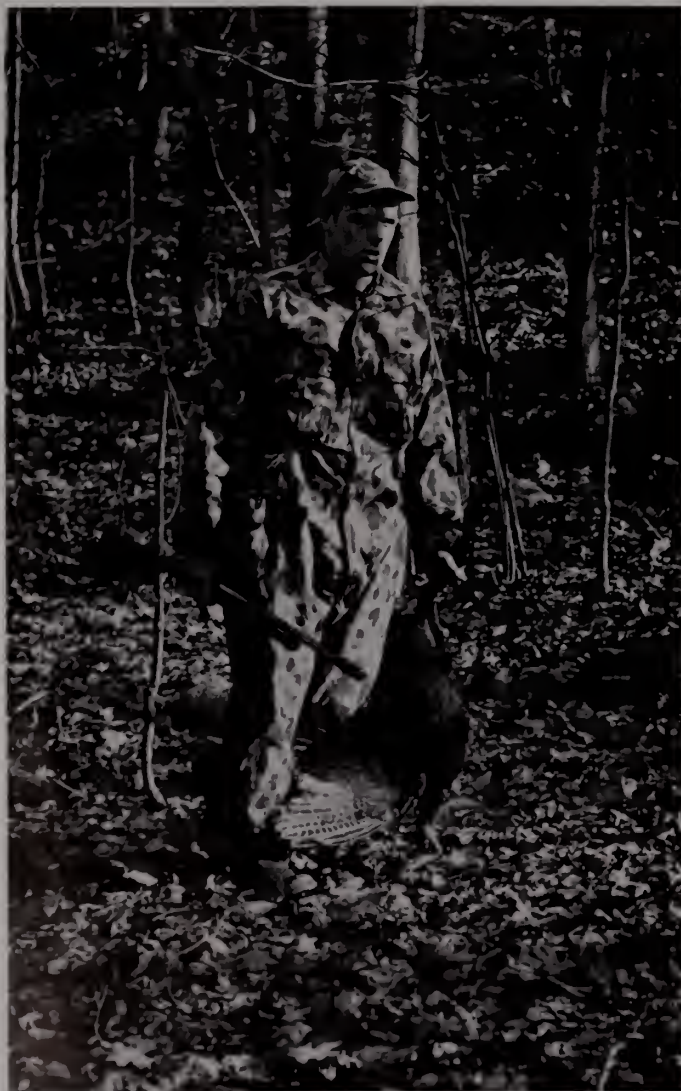


Photo by Leonard Lee Rue

While a go-slow, play-it-safe regulation policy won't lead to complications, neither will it produce answers. These can be obtained only by trials such as Virginia's experimental spring gobbler season this year.

**W**E'VE got game to waste, and we're wasting it. I'm not talking about the loss of cripples, substantial though it may be. Neither do I mean those neighborly gifts of slightly high quail that wind up in the garbage can. The wasted game I'm talking about never reaches the hunter's bag because of a failure to pluck it when it's ripe.

And that's something more than a figure of speech, because small game, like mature pumpkins, might better be gleaned in its autumn fullness. Neither hangs on the vine indefinitely; neither can be stockpiled against the future.

Today we view with alarm the loss of wildlife habitat by the encroachment of civilization, the great increase in hunting pressure. What we don't always realize is that we could double the take of upland game in many areas with positive benefit to the herds and flocks. Nature is the cruelest killer of all, and much of the game we spare is left to nature's slow, agonizing, and inexorable destruction.

True, most animals have a phenomenal potential for increase. But nature, with its system of checks and balances, offsets that increase by direct, brutal means—starvation, periodic disease epidemics, destruction by predators. In the normal cycle, the breeding populations wind up about in the same numbers each spring. And this happens despite hunting pressure—or lack of it. The hunter has limited significance in nature's scheme of things.

This fact began to dawn on game managers following the big push 30 years ago to create refuges for upland game. It had been expected that the birds in the refuges would multiply and spill onto surrounding land. But alert managers observed that this didn't happen to any appreciable extent. Refuge quail, pheasants, and other birds built up summers and died back winters—just like the birds on the outside. And this happened without any assist from hunters. Today most of these old refuges serve as public hunting grounds.

The moral is plain: Hunters do take large amounts of game—but only because they get to it first, and beat out nature's other methods of keeping game populations in check. They are not additional killers—merely substitutes. The rate of mortality remains the same, under normal conditions, whether we hunt heavily or lightly.

So the question naturally arises: Are we harvesting all the upland game we should be harvesting?

Across the country, for a variety of habitats and a variety of game, the wildlife pros say, "No. We are not permitting hunters a fair share of this inevitable mortality." On the

Adapted from August 1961 issue of *Field and Stream* with the addition of supplementary material by the author. Formerly a research biologist with the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Dr. Linduska joined the staff of Remington Arms Company several years ago and serves as Director of Wildlife Management at Remington Farms, Chestertown, Maryland.



average, 25 percent of the fall crop now goes to hunters. We can double this proportion and take half, they say.

This conclusion is based on a variety of measurements and observations, including actual harvesting of the full 50 percent on experimental areas—a cropping that caused no reduction of numbers in subsequent years. Elsewhere, populations were checked on public hunting grounds where gunning pressure was four or five times greater than on surrounding private land. Again no ill effects.

A few years ago, Hans Uhlig of West Virginia reported to the North American Wildlife Conference on his gray-squirrel studies. "Losses due to natural mortality," he said, "appear to be three or four times that of hunter take. It is difficult to increase the present inadequate harvest in extensive forest lands. Larger daily bag limits and longer seasons are recommended in addition to access improvements.

In Michigan an experimental area was pounded with a gunning pressure four times greater than the state average, and 40 percent of its ruffed grouse were taken. No ill effects were noted, and it was concluded that the state-wide seasons could be extended to three months or longer without danger of overshooting.

On a managed cottontail area in Pennsylvania, hunting pressure and kill were more than tripled over a three-year period. The conclusion: "Observations and trapping following the hunting season indicated that the cottontail harvest could have been much heavier."

Pheasants are polygamous, one cock handling a half dozen or more hens. Accordingly, there has been no good reason for conservatism in the taking of male birds—even to harvesting 75 percent of the fall total. As for hens, nature's inexorable rule is that fall populations are cut back to a spring remnant, hunted or not. And the rule doesn't say, "except hen pheasants." Are we missing a good bet for adding to the game bag in a sound and sensible way?

Burton Lauckhart, Chief of Game Management for the State of Washington, thinks we are. He has this to say: "Hens must die as rapidly as they are reproduced or they would eventually cover the earth. . . . Hunter harvest can replace much of the natural losses of hen pheasants. . . . It is my opinion that there is no good reason for continuing to maintain the hen pheasant as the sacred cow of North American game birds."

Reports of this sort convinced Dr. Fred Dale of the Fish and Wildlife Service that "with most resident species we have been more conservative than necessary. If we measure the resource by game in the bag, we can greatly increase our resources . . . by encouraging a more realistic harvest."

What is involved in a 50 percent harvest of small game by hunters? And how do you go about accomplishing it? Research produces some surprising information. In the first place, game managers find that hunting of resident game is by fits and starts—mostly one fit and one start. The opening day and first weekend find every hunter out beating the bushes. From there on the whole thing rapidly peters out.

On a couple of Michigan's managed hunting areas gun pressure has been tallied for years. During a 22-day pheasant season it's similar each year: half the hunting in the first week, 30 percent in the second, 20 percent in the third. Longer seasons have the same pattern; a big first week, then rapidly diminishing activity. Obviously, then, merely lengthening a season does not materially increase the kill. West Virginia's Hans Uhlig estimates that lengthening the squirrel



Photo by Leonard Lee Rue

In areas where roadways are few and hunter penetration is slight, abandonment of all hunting restrictions would still fail to account for a full take of the surplus of species such as deer, grouse and rabbits.

season would bring only a two percent rise in the kill for each added week. Other surveys indicate the same thing.

Increasing bag limits would have a greater effect, but how much? Even now a large proportion of hunters do not fill their limits. Perhaps the methodology of bringing a harvest up to 50 percent of the potential lies in a combination of changes: bigger bag, longer seasons, and liberalization of hunting rules.

In any event, experimentation and an inquiring attitude to regulations must be our first approach. They may produce data that will challenge our preconceived notions. Take, for instance, the sharp grouse decline of the mid-forties. Normally, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Michigan have about equal harvests of birds. When the shortage developed in 1944, Minnesota closed down for four years; in 1945, Wisconsin began a three-year suspension. Michigan maintained hunting as usual, and its gunners took a half million grouse. In 1948, seasons were reopened in Minnesota and Wisconsin. And among the three states, Michigan had high kill!

The British have taken a realistic view of grouse management for a long time, and the data—plus the conclusions drawn from it—is readily available in two large volumes. In these books you'll find statements like this:

"We find that on each moor so examined there is a very clearly defined limit of winter stock which it is dangerous to approach and almost certain disaster to exceed. . . . Each owner should make it his object to kill down his grouse until only an average winter stock remains. The task will not be an easy one, for in an exceptionally good season it is almost impossible to make any real impression on the stock."

After a hundred years of grouse research, the British have laid down what they call the one great law of stock management. It is this: *Determine the number of birds that the moor will carry safely in March, and irrespective of all other considerations kill the birds down to that limit.*

We, too, are beginning to understand the population behavior of some of our game species. But there's a hitch: al-





Photo by Leonard Lee Rue

We could double the take of upland game in many areas with positive benefit to the herds and flocks. Much of the game we spare is left to nature's slow, agonizing, inexorable destruction.

though we can widen our knowledge and improve our techniques, we cannot easily shake off our conservatism. On this point listen to C. J. Mantle, Commissioner of Arizona Game and Fish Commission.

"Rather surprising to me," he says, "has been the reaction by the public when there have been recommendations by researchers for increased bag limits or longer seasons. They seem less prone to accept any tendency to loosen up on regulation than . . . to tighten or shorten the seasons and limits. They often prefer that the commission withhold decisions until the technician rechecks his findings."

A go-slow, play-it-safe policy may be commendable in that it won't lead to complications. But neither will it produce conclusive answers. Often these can be obtained only by actual trial.

And trials there have been. Missouri, for example, is one of the top cottontail states, but it's not because they pamper their bunnies. In a nine-month season and with a bag limit of 10 a day, they kill six million.

And waterfowl. Ducks, generally, have about the same reproductive potential as most upland game. But they're more vulnerable to gunning, certainly. Being tied to water in migration and hunting, it eliminates a lot of land area where there's no need to look. They come to the hunter in place of the hunter having to seek them out. And resident game absorbs the pressure of opening day and first weekend but once, whereas ducks face this pent-up enthusiasm of new hunting audiences a dozen times in crossing provincial and state boundaries—north to south.

The seasons? It may be 40, 50 or 60 days to you but it's 6½ months for the duck—September into March—Canada into Mexico. The bag limit in 1960 was as high as six a day, with a few mergansers and an armload of coots thrown in.

By most standards of upland gunning, these approach "lids-off" regulations on an international scale. And for some species it's likely we're cropping the maximum with a hunting take of 50 percent. But even with this heavy ham-

mering, the current decline of waterfowl is more logically explained in other terms, such as, drought which has reduced water areas by three-fourths, and 50 years of drainage that has accounted for 100 million acres of marshland.

For some upland species, in some areas, it appears likely that abandonment of all hunting restrictions would still fail to account for a full take of the surplus. Two things tend to prevent it; both deal with the matter of accessibility.

In one instance we have remote areas where squirrels, grouse, rabbits and deer abound. But roadways are few and hunter penetration is slight. Under such conditions it's unlikely that any combination of liberalized regulations will even "skim off the cream." Hunters in numbers simply do not get into such out-of-the-way places.

It's surprising, too, how little it takes these days for an area to be "remote." In parts of densely settled New England, deer and grouse are well-cropped for a half mile on either side of roadways. Beyond that you'll find browse-lines, too many deer, and grouse and rabbits that never see a hunter.

Along with many other states, West Virginia has this same problem. I discussed it recently with Carl Johnson, former Director of the Conservation Commission:

"Partly it's a reflection of the soft life," said Carl, "but even more of an item is the fear of getting lost. You'd be amazed at the number of city people who come to these mountains to hunt, then stay glued to trails and roads."

The other type of inaccessibility is brought about through "No Hunting" signs. It's a problem that has always been with us to some extent. It gets no better as pressures grow. Some private farm lands are closed to all hunting. On these, the *total* game crop is wasted. On others, limited access results in partial waste. But quite apart from what hunting regulations allow, "You can't hit 'em if you can't see 'em." And denied access will limit the kill as surely as conservative regulations.

This is a problem that merits more and better thinking than we've given it thus far. Some happy solution to permit realistic cropping of wildlife on private lands could double hunting opportunity and the take of game.

Maybe a realization that game laws can be grossly manipulated within sound biological limits will provide a clue. Maybe a drastic lengthening of seasons and with it some state control of who hunts when, would ration pressures in a way more palatable to the "gun-shy" landowner.

Maybe it will come to a "landowner compensation plan" as proposed by Jack Berryman at the 1958 convention of the International Association of Game, Fish and Conservation Commissioners. Or, maybe hunter-access can be incorporated in an over-all plan to enlarge on recreational use of private lands, such as is being talked about by the Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission.

Or maybe the best bet is through a do-it-yourself program as is being promoted so creditably by the Izaak Walton League of America, in their Hunt America Time.

Whatever the solutions to providing more hunting, whether it's a drastic revision of current regulations, new developments and programs for getting hunters on areas now available, or a combination of these and more, one thing is reassuring. We have a wide margin for liberalizing hunting before we overtake the productive capacity of most species of resident game. And from all indications, we've plowed-under enough of the fall crop in past years to insure good future fertility.



# The Ward-Rue Wildlife Management Area

By HOWARD L. SHELDON  
*District Game Biologist  
Culpeper, Virginia*

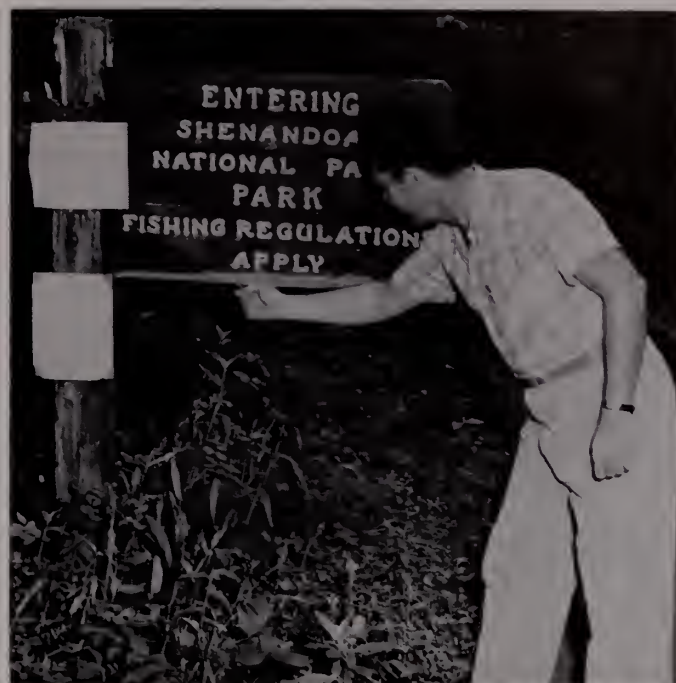
“WHERE is a good place to go hunting?” is a question asked Game Commission personnel nearly every day of the year. We can not direct hunters to John Doe’s farm, where there is an abundance of quail, or to Bill Jones who has a lot of rabbits on his farm. We must direct them to areas which are open to everyone. We are fortunate in having the two national forests in western Virginia that we can recommend as good public hunting areas. But where can we suggest that those sportsmen in Piedmont and Tidewater Virginia go, who do not have time to drive to the national forests?

The need for developing public hunting areas in the eastern and central sections of Virginia is obvious. However, this portion of the state presents one big problem—land is expensive. Thus, a new method of acquiring public hunting areas was developed. It consists of cooperative agreements between the Game Commission and landowners with holdings of several thousand acres. Basically the agreement opens the areas to public hunting, giving the Commission the responsibility of managing the wildlife on the areas. The landowners, in return, receive patrolling by the State game warden to prevent fire, timber stealing, and vandalism, and this builds up favorable public relations in the community.

The cooperative agreement was the method used to acquire the Ward-Rue Wildlife Management Area in Madison and Greene counties as a public hunting and fishing area. C. D. Rue, of the Ward-Rue Lumber Company, Culpeper, Virginia, was approached regarding the developing of his property as a public hunting area, and on August 21, 1959, an agreement was signed between the Commission and Ward-Rue Lumber Company opening their 8,000 acres of property in Madison and Greene counties to public hunting and fishing. Upon investigating further, it was learned that R. C. Aylor and Son, and Harry Berry owned 500 acres adjacent to the Ward-Rue property in Madison County. A cooperative agreement was signed with this partnership which brought the total to 8,500 acres of land which was opened to public hunting and fishing. This was the first area in northern Piedmont Virginia to be thus developed.

The area is divided into three tracts; 700 acres on the South River in Greene County; 2,800 acres on the Rapidan River in Madison County; and 5,000 acres on the Conway (Middle) River in Madison County. The three areas are unique in that each borders the Shenandoah National Park and each has a very good native trout stream flowing through it, the largest being the Rapidan River which was well known as the location of President Hoover’s retreat.

These areas are mountainous and access to them is questionable during severe weather conditions. The Rapidan River tract is accessible following Route 649 from the Criglersville-Syria road. The Conway (Middle) River tract may be reached by following Route 615 above Graves Mill or Route 667 from Fletcher. The South River tract is less



Commission Photo by Cutler

The author examines mute evidence that bears are present on the Ward-Rue public hunting and fishing areas in Madison and Greene counties.

accessible at present. However, it can be reached by following Route 637 above McMullen Store in Greene County to Route 642, left on 642 until crossing the first ford. Vehicle travel above this point is not recommended. The area may be reached by walking up South river about a half-mile.

Game populations on the areas are not high. More years of management work should improve this situation. Squirrel and grouse populations seem to be good nearly every year. A few bear have been killed on the areas in the past two years as well as a few deer. Turkeys have been seen, but the season is closed on them at the present time.

Trout fishing on all areas is good. The portion of South River included in the public hunting and fishing area provides good native trout fishing. The Conway (Middle) River and its feeder streams support a very good native trout population.

The Rapidan River, which is one of the best trout streams in the state, has been made a “Fish-For-Fun” stream, which means only artificial barbless single hooks may be used and that all fish must be returned to the stream immediately. This was the first such stream in the state set aside for those who fish only for fun. This project has been well received. Approximately 500 fisherman days were spent on the stream between April 1 and September 1. (The season on this stream closed October 15.) Fishermen from West Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Maryland have joined the Virginians in enjoying this type of fishing. The stream, although it carries a good native trout population, was stocked in early spring with a few large rainbow trout. Many of these are still to be caught by those who have the ability to outsmart the experienced trout. Since the Rapidan River also flows through the Shenandoah National Park, that portion was also made a “Fish-For-Fun” stream as well as the Staunton River (Wilson Run) which feeds into the Rapidan but is wholly within the park. These streams make a total of nearly 12 miles of fishable “Fish-For-Fun” water.



# The Return Of The Canada Geese

By JOSEPH J. SHOMON

THERE is no sharp line of demarcation between autumn and the winter season. The transformation, for the most part, is unhurried and gentle, like a furred animal stealing through the woods on padded feet. Seasonal messengers there are aplenty: the staghorn sumac's turn from bright crimson to purple; the final dropping of tenacious leaves of the white oak; the bark of a fox in the brownish woods. Nothing, however, heralds the true change in the seasons like the return of wild geese. Nostalgic . . . melancholic . . . the voices of the wild geese in the night are, paradoxically, one of the most heartwarming sounds in nature.

Our Canadian geese begin showing up in small flocks during the last half of October. The full flush of their coming, however, does not hit us until early in November. Then is the time to leave the office or workshop and steal into the marshes to watch them come in.

The wild geese we most often hear and see in the Southland are correctly named: Canada geese. For six months they have lived the exemplary life of parents in the north country—Canada and the northern border states, reared their young with watchful eyes and trained them for the long journey ahead. Out of a nest of five eggs, perhaps three goslings survived to make the migration. The rigors of the drought and the ways and fortunes of menacing predators took their toll of the young.

In geese, the urge to follow the sun begins in late August. By mid-September they respond to an ageless instinct and begin to gather in great families. Soon they are off and well on their way. Out of the barrens of Labrador and Quebec they come . . . out of the lake country of

Chief of the Commission's education division and editor of Virginia Wildlife for nearly 14 years, Mr. Shomon joined the staff of the National Audubon Society in New York City in June 1961 and serves as director of the Society's newly organized Nature Centers Division.



"They're almost overhead now, each wingbeat audibly fanning the wind, both wings turned upward bracing against the stiff breeze, feather lines clearly visible."

Ontario . . . out of the wheatfields of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta, winging southward over the border country, the Porcupines and the Laurentians, and across the St. Lawrence. Down the big rivers they come . . . the Penobscot . . . Connecticut, Hudson, Delaware. Out of the Great Lakes they pour, out and over the Sandusky and Monongahela, across the Susquehanna and down the Shenandoah and the Potomac . . . down to the Chesapeake Bay. Over the Ohio more of them come and down the Tennessee, the Mississippi, the Missouri . . . the Red. Down to the ricefields they go—to those of Arkansas, Louisiana, and Texas. In the far West they veer for Tule Lake and the Bear River marshes and the great valleys of the Sacramento and San Joaquin.

To be on the receiving end of one of these great goose flights is to witness one of the most heartwarming spectacles in "birdom."

Out of the gray clouds one November morn you detect a faint call, something like the yelp of a dog in the far-away woods. It is remarkable how mankind the country over cocks its ear at that strange sound . . . wondering, guessing. Then it comes again, louder, repeated, and more distinct.

Squatting in the reeds, you pull a few more cattails around you and take another deep breath. You swallow and strain, scanning the autumn treeline across the barren river far away.

Now the voices are clear, loud, more numerous than ever, their cacophony in frenzy. Still they are invisible. Suddenly they emerge from the low clouds, a great tattered flag of whitish-black shimmering wings . . . darting, climbing, changing formation . . . a giant V formation with streams of wings blown together and torn apart, but advancing steadily like the sweep of an approaching storm.

Onward they come, larger than ever, each bird now more visible; every head and neck a long black-white stocking, stretched and scanning the waters below, searching for the safety of a landing strip in the river and marshes ahead. They're much closer now, Branta—leader of the flock—calling, his beak opening and closing: *E-R-O-O-N-K* . . . *O-N-K*, *O-N-K*, *E-R-O-N-K*, the order to set wings.

They're almost overhead now, each wingbeat audibly fanning the wind, both wings turned upward bracing against the stiff breeze, feather lines clearly visible.

On they come. First the perfect V itself, then the large bands—a hundred, perhaps a thousand wild geese arrayed in mass formation overhead. For a full four minutes they come . . . noisy, babblesome, their ponderous wings fanning the air like windmills. But they're slowing down. Some are beginning to set their wings. Others are bracing their whole bodies against the wind. In moments the first geese are down, skimming the water's surface and landing in a series of splashes and goose talk. Others follow. The landings become confusion with squads, platoons, and even companies piling down in wild pandemonium—truly a bedlam of wings, splashing water, and goose exclamations.

But the disorder is shortlived. When all of the stragglers have finally arrived and the loud welcoming has subsided, an amazing tranquillity returns to the great flock, sparked only by soft murmurings and occasional low babble.

Yes, our Canada geese are back—back once more safely in the marsh. Already a new buoyancy is in the air and every creature, including man, is stirred and the stirring seems good.



# The Burnt Hammock Bear

By LEE GILDEA, JR.  
Cobham, Virginia

Illustrations by the Author



Lon Scantlin wasn't on hand to meet me when I got off the train, which worried me a trifle, for the depot at Hickory Creek wasn't the most promising spot on earth to be stranded. There was little to distinguish it from any other southside depot, flanked on one side by great stacks of cordwood awaiting loading, and on the other by a rundown building that might once have been a store. With the exception of a hawk in the top of a tall sycamore tree along the creek, the only living soul in evidence was the ticket agent, and he was ensconced in his office with the finality of an owl in a hollow tree. So I sat on my satchel on the platform, debating whether to wait a while longer or go in and inquire about the next train.

I had about decided on the latter course when a clattering arose somewhere beyond the wood piles, and a rickety, high-wheeled cart drawn by two immense Holstein steers lumbered into sight, from the seat of which Lon grinned and waved a calloused paw.

"Heyo, Four-eyes," he hooted respectfully. "Didn't know whether you was worth comin' fer or not." He reached down for my satchel and gun case, and then, on the pretense of giving me a lift up, nearly jerked my arm from its socket. "Got my letter, did you? Old burnt hammock bear's gone to stealin' hogs, an' I thought you might like to get in on the fun." He whistled through his teeth and rapped his long drive-pole against the floor. "Hup, Byrd! Eyup, you Bright!" and the oxen leaned into the yoke, and set off at that lazy-looking amble that a man has to step out to match.

The muddiest road in Southside Virginia led out past some weedy, winter brown fields, and thence into second growth pine scrub, working its way deeper towards the edge of the Dismal Swamp. It had been some years since I had last visited Lon, "treed him in his den" as he put it, and the old place had grown up considerably in the interval. Now that Emma was gone and the boys moved away, Lon's struggle with the swamp growth had become one-sided, and the land was reclaiming something of its own. The weathered house among the old oaks was the same as always, however. Lon stopped the cart at the porch, surrounded by half a dozen dogs of assorted descriptions, each trying to make his welcome heard above the others. From behind the house came the howls of one left out of the fun.

"Bear dogs?"

Lon nodded, indicating a thin blue-tick with his stick. "Old Juba, thar, is, an' the red puppy yonder will be if he ever 'mounts to anything. Had to tie Rattler in a stall so's he wouldn' foller." He fumbled my things out from under the seat. "You jest as well git off here. I'll be back directly. Lamp's on the middle table." He disappeared toward the barns, while I entered the house, preceded by Old Juba, whose manner assured me that she was allowed to "come

"Twenty minutes of scrambling brought us to the base of a large persimmon tree, where a fat 'possum was added to the night's bag, and with the red puppy in tow, we struck out for the boat."

in." While I fumbled with the lamp she crossed to the rickety settee under the window, jumped up, and, after turning herself around a time or two, settled down with a thump. Lon appeared shortly with a stick of wood for the stove, which he "chunked" into activity. When it was burning nicely he straightened, hung his hat and coat on a peg behind the door, and ran Juba off the settee.

"Stretch out an' res' you'self whilst I scratch up some supper," he invited. I did, with pleasure, and was joined by Juba as soon as Lon left the room.

Supper was soon fixed and sooner put away. Lon put the last pan on the already precariously cluttered shelf, and went to the door.

"Moon's comin'," he observed. "Time we git organized hit'll be time to go." He left me worrying with my boots and disappeared into the back of the house, returning shortly with a couple of lanterns, his horn, and that huge specimen of semi-portable heavy artillery that his grandfather had carried throughout "the War." After satisfying himself concerning his store of powder, ball, and caps, he stumped out, with Juba and myself in close attendance. The red puppy and a lean black-and-tan that must have been Rattler joined us in the yard. The five of us ambled down through the overgrown field toward the "landing," followed by the lamentations of the remaining dogs, who were stopped up in the cornhouse.

As we neared the old dock, a whoop arose from the darkness up the creek. Lon answered enthusiastically, and shortly a dim craft emerged from the shadows, propelled by a silent figure in the back and containing, judging from the sound, at least 20 hounds. Directly it slid within the circle of lantern light, revealing a battered john-boat, a more battered poler, and, amazingly, only two hounds, starvation thin and totally malicious looking. Lon swung down to the boat. "You 'member Charley?" I did. Nobody could forget One-eye Charley, the Indian, a no-account, poaching, thieving scoundrel, and, so far as I know, the only living man who knew the Swamp by day or night. Lon attributed

Presently a biology major at the University of Virginia, Lee was the \$400 scholarship winner in the 11th Annual Wildlife Essay Contest (1957-1958), sponsored by the Virginia Commission of Game and Inland Fisheries and the Virginia Division of the Izaak Walton League of America.



his success in the Swamp to his being the "ugliest, oneriest critter in the place." I'm sure the title went undisputed.

Lon balanced himself in the middle of the boat and began lifting down dogs; the puppy first, then Juba, and finally Rattler, who at the last minute jumped, and landed fighting. For a minute or so there was a "donnybrook" of the first order, which Charley finally subdued by flailing Lon and hounds impartially with his pushpole. When order was restored, I joined the others, and Charley pushed off toward the swamp. The landing soon disappeared, and we slid silently, suspended beneath black sky upon blacker water, hemmed in on both sides by rank vegetation, which opened occasionally to reveal the mouth of some mysterious creek of backwater. Gradually the moon rose, until we could see for some distance. It seemed as if we were the only silent thing in the swamp. Coons squabbled up a backwater, and a great owl floated into a tree overhead and gave a piercing shriek that nearly put me overboard, until his booming, laughing hoot recalled me. Several times deer splashed up suddenly from their drinking.

How far we went I don't know. I am quite certain that it was far enough so that I would have died of old age before I ever found my own way out. At one point we stopped beneath a sort of bluff to put the dogs out, then moved on, following the devious wanderings of the creek. Finally Charley gave the boat a shove that sent it gliding against the bank beneath a screen of laurel.

"Now then," said Lon. "You jus' keep your eye on that openin' yonder."

It seemed an hour before the dogs ever struck, and then they were away off on the edge of our hearing. Juba had the track first, and worried with it a while before Rattler got in to help her. Then a big-mouthed dog of Charley's opened up. The three of them cold trailed for a good way before they began to get a run on the bear, but at length the track picked up, and Charley's other dog got in, and then the puppy. They were working hard in the undergrowth, unable to get close on the bear. A large buck picked his way down to the crossing, stared in our direction a moment, then splashed across and disappeared in the brush on the other side. The hounds were working closer to us, deep mouthed and persistent, trying to run in the thick growth.

The bear came without a sound, dropping abruptly into a patch of moonlight at the edge of the creek, where he paused, listening, gauging his lead on the dogs. I watched him in fascination until Lon's heel came abruptly into my shin. "Shoot, dammit!" he whispered. At the sound, the bear half-reared, as if to bolt back up the bank. For a moment after the shot he stood astounded, then settled into the shallows with a splash. He looked big as a steer when we got up to him, lying half out of the creek.

"Go four hundred?" said Lon. Charley nodded.

"Whars he hit?" In the dark, and with the mud and water, and the blood, it was hard to tell exactly. "Over the lef' eye somewheres," declared Lon, straightening. "What you think of 'im, old gal?" He thumped Old Juba's muddy sides. Juba whined and waved her tail slowly, then snarled jealously as one of Charley's dogs tried to sniff the bear. The others stood a respectful distance aside. Lon raised the lantern. "Juba, Rattler, youah two," he peered about him. "Where'n heck's that puppy? Heah! Heah. Red! Heah!"

As if in answer, a rhythmic, chopped note reached us across the swamp. "Durnitall anyhow!" said Lon, with disgust.



"We were perhaps a quarter-mile from the creek when the old dogs 'fairly jumped on top of sumpin!' and the whole business came tearing through the woods toward us with a commotion worthy of a runaway team."

"Won't he come in?"

"Heck, no! He's treed himself a blasted 'possum an' he'll be there till the cows come home lessn we go after him. Tie up the boat, Charley, an' come on."

"Ain' got nuthin' tie it to."

"Tie it to the bear! Come on, we ain' got all night."

This solution seemed logical enough. Charley knotted the rope snugly about the bear's middle, and we set off up an old logging path toward the puppy. Twenty minutes of scrambling brought us to the base of a large persimmon tree, where a fat 'possum was added to the night's bag, and with the red puppy in tow, we struck out for the boat.

We were perhaps a quarter-mile from the creek when the old dogs "fairly jumped on top of sumpin!" and the whole business came tearing up the woods toward us with a commotion worthy of a runaway team. Something of great size bore down upon us, splintering underbrush, with the dogs tight packed and sight running one jump behind. Lon stared into the dark in amazement, trying to keep hold of his pants and the frantic puppy at the same time. All at once he let out a whoop.

"Git, boys. Hits comin' up the path!"

We got. Hardly had we left the path before they went by. The burnt swamp bear was in the lead, running like the Devil was after him, and bouncing along behind him like a can on a dog's tail came the john-boat. And every blessed dog in the pack was riding in the boat like kids on a hayride, and yelling their heads off.

When the noise died away and the puppy had settled down a bit, Lon came out of hiding.

"I'll be," he said softly. Charley nodded silent agreement. I disengaged myself from a private argument with a brier patch and joined them.

"Well," said Lon, "I guess that means we walk home."

It was three in the morning when we reached Lon's, after a prolonged struggle with every type of impassable object in the Dismal Swamp. Juba and Rattler were there to meet us. It was hard to say who was the most "beat."

Just how the race ended we never knew. The dogs all got home by the next day, and some months later Charley found his john-boat, with the broken rope attached, lodged between two stout trees. To this day nobody has seen hide nor hair of the burnt swamp bear. Apparently his short term as a draft animal was too much for him, and he left for parts unknown.



# Quail Hunting

## " By The Numbers "

By GEORGE A. GEHRKEN  
*Franklin, Virginia*

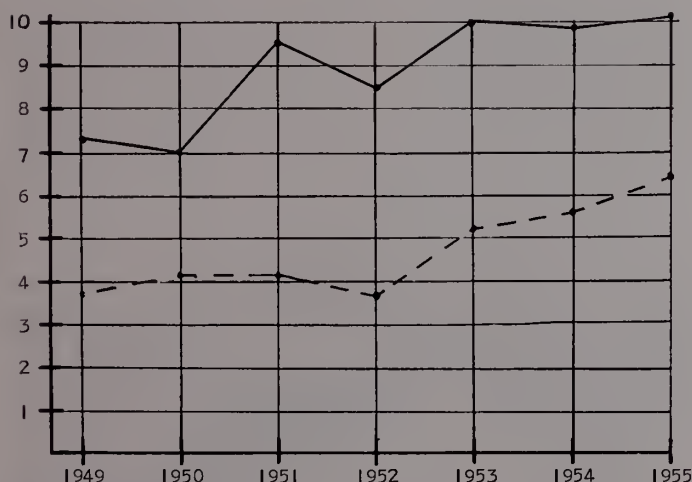
**M**ORE hours are spent hunting on the street corner, on the job, by the stove, in front of an open fire with friends, or in an easy chair just "sorta dreaming" than could ever be spent in the field. There just isn't enough game to survive this amount of hunting pressure.

Virginia quail hunters are no different from other hunters in this respect. As soon as there is the smell of fall in the air, the quail hunter starts to check on the health of his hunting companion, "old" Jack or Mack or Dot. The bird hunter who lives on the farm or in a small town starts tying his bird dog because its value has increased about 500 percent over last spring. The town and city hunter cleans the kennel and starts exercising or brushing his pal.

This is also the time of year that quail hunters get together and kill a portion of last season's quail for the "eleventeenth" time. In our town, one occasionally sees a pair of sober but "glassy eyed" bird hunters killing a triple on Main Street without a gun, and there is no doubt what is happening from a block away even without sound effects.

Because, every year, the number of hunters increases and some covey ranges give away to subdivisions, factories and pastures, it is important that hunters get the maximum pleasure from every quail. Through the cooperation of a group of 10 hunters in Southampton County during the years 1949-1955, some interesting data on hunting success was compiled. Because records were lost by some hunters and others failed to keep suitable records some years, the records showed 3,427 hours of quail hunting for the seven-year period. Since, on the average, seven out of the 10 hunters kept records, these hunters averaged approximately 70 hours of quail hunting per season.

Formerly a district game biologist with the Virginia Game Commission, the author is now wildlife conservation supervisor with the Union Bag-Camp Paper Corporation.



Solid line shows number of coveys located for every 10 hours hunted; broken line shows number of coveys found in the woods for every 10 hours hunted.

The chief quail food in this coastal plain region is corn and soya beans, and the quail seem to spend only enough time in the field to fill their crops. They then hasten to the very thick woods where shooting is very difficult, to say the least. Most hunters do not hunt the woods for obvious reasons, but over this period at least 50 percent of the coveys of quail located were found in the woods.

Of course, quail hunters expect every day they go to be better than average, but these hunters usually found nine coveys for every 10 hours hunted and killed one quail every hour and 11 minutes.

From an analysis of the wings saved by the hunters, the percent of young quail (hatched the spring and summer of the kill) ranged from 74 to 85 percent of the total kill. Just from this information, one would expect that the years that had the largest percent of young birds in the kill (and, therefore, more quail) would provide the hunter with the

**Summary of Data from Hunter Record Cards  
Covering the Period 1946 Through 1955**

Coveys Located Per Hr. Hunted	Quail Killed Per Hr. Hunted	Males Per 100 Females
.90	.84	114.8
% Shot & Lost	Coveys Located In Woods	% Imma- ture Killed
9.3	50.5%	80.6%

best seasons. This was not the case. The only factor that even came close to having an effect on hunter success (coveys located per hour hunted) was fall weather. This factor apparently had more effect on hunter success than any other known factor. The days during the hunting season which had minimum temperatures of 32° or less and the days which had a half-inch or more of rainfall were the days on which hunter success was greatest. Therefore, it seems that in a year with a reasonable quail hatch, hunting success is dependent upon cool weather, which makes it necessary for the quail to eat more to keep warm, and moisture which is necessary for the dogs to pick up the scent.

Other information gleaned from this study was that one should expect that slightly more than nine percent of the bagged birds shot will be lost. This loss can be corrected somewhat by an added effort in encouraging the bird dog to take more interest in retrieving.

It is hoped that these numbers will provide the quail hunter with data to compare his hunting success with, resulting in more hours of pleasure in front of the fire and in the easy chair.

### Wunder Wildlife Management Area

Sportsmen are now welcome on the Wunder Wildlife Management Area, a 1,335-acre area purchased in 1958 by the Virginia Commission of Game and Inland Fisheries and managed as a public hunting area. This land is in three tracts along Sours Run and Supin Lick Mountain in Rockingham County, and can be reached by going west on State Route 259 out of Broadway to Cootes Store. The upper tracts can be reached best by turning north across the bridge at Cootes Store onto State Route 613 and then west on Route 812. To reach the lower tract, continue on Route 259 through Brocks Gap to Chimney Rock and then turn north on State Route 611.



# Dove Days

By EV'S GUNNER AKC #S-947932  
as expressed by R. F. MARION  
Richmond, Virginia

I DIDN'T think dove season would ever get here. It's hard for me to keep up with time through a long hot summer. You see, there's hardly anything a good bird dog can do when it's warm but lie around and be hot and impatient. It's warm now on my back, where the sun filters through the cover of bent corn stalks. The Boss told his hunting buddy that this was necessary because I have so much white fur that I'd stand out like a sore thumb. So, while I sit under the cave of corn behind his stool, the Boss scans the sky over the dove field with squinted eyes.

Last night I couldn't believe my eyes when I saw him drag out the faded and dirty, plastic-faced brush pants that had hung all summer, unused, in the closet. I knew for sure what was going on when the pungent odor of nitro solvent assailed my too long dormant nose. Without even looking up, I knew that the Boss was cleaning the little 20 double that he is so fond of. The way he caresses that gun I think he must love it more than he does me. If that thing could point and fetch birds, I'm sure I'd be out of a job.

I was very restless last night. I slept at the threshold of his bedroom—didn't want to take the chance that he might leave for a day's hunting and forget to take me along. It didn't seem like he would ever wake up. Some of the Boss's friends don't like the idea of making a "pet" out of a hunting dog by letting him live in the house. I can't speak for the setters and pointers I've worked with, but, as a Brittany spaniel, it hasn't hurt me one bit. It seems the more we're together, the more rapport we seem to have with each other.

*Funny, I was so deeply engrossed in thought that I didn't see the Boss stand up and shoot. I'm going to have to keep on my toes. Deadeye, two shots at a low bird and he didn't even loosen a feather. I wonder if all hunters use the kind of language the Boss uses when he misses.*

Well, as I was saying, the Boss doesn't let me do too much running during the summer. It seems he has some rather strong ideas about bird dogs running wild during the nesting season. I was lying in a corner one evening, with my stomach full of hamburger and my nose still full of quail scent, when I heard the Boss and Bob, his hunting partner, discussing it. In the evenings, they light up their pipes and solve the problems of the world through clouds of smoke with many profound words. My two "conversationists" sipped Bob's home-made dandelion wine and agreed that self-hunting dogs are today's number one predators. I figured that they had both read the same magazine article.

*More shots. This time it's Bob and he doesn't miss as much as the Boss. He winged a bird that was really moving when he was hit, and he's gliding down. That means a cripple to find and that's just my meat. I gotta jump now. When the Boss barks "Fetch" like that, he means business. . . .*

A few years ago I would have had trouble finding that bird. Now I know all their tricks. I found him hiding under a fallen log. It's funny how a wounded dove will almost always crawl under something. There was even one that

drowned in a puddle of water, just to get out of sight. I'm real proud of the fact that, since Bob and the Boss have been taking me dove hunting with them, we haven't lost one bird. We've even found a lot of birds that other hunters have crippled and have not been able to find. Bob is a bug on conservation and hates to think of game that is shot and then wasted. Don, his dog, is a setter, and doesn't seem to like the smell of doves or woodcock. A spaniel doesn't mind it though, so that's where I come in.

The Boss was a little worried that working doves would have a harmful effect on my pointing instincts. I wanted to tell him that it was silly. People don't give a good dog the credit he deserves. I can recognize a dove, in the air, a long way off. How can I stand point on a fleeting, darting, 50-mile-an-hour rocket? It doesn't make sense.

*Oh boy! Guns shooting all over the field now. A big flock, wheeling and turning in every direction, looking for a place to pitch in and feed. The flat "whoomp" of the 12 gauge guns contrasting with the high pitched crack of the little twenties. Sweet and sour smelling smoke drifting downwind, pierced by falling wad fragments. It's action like this that's the dove hunter's dream and the "fetchin dog's" reason for being. I've got work to do. . . .*

Golly, that was a workout. Autumn in Virginia sure can be hot. It was worth it though. I managed to pick up eight birds. The Boss and Bob didn't get all of them, but I brought them in anyway. How can a dog tell who shot what? The Boss'll settle up with the other hunters later. That red-faced, fat man up the line must have gotten at least three of them. He's a good shot, but I still don't like him. Asking the Boss if I was a cross between a setter and a spaniel—some nerve! Not many southern hunters have ever seen a Brittany spaniel before. We just came to this country in the early thirties and have been primarily more popular in the north.

*Somebody or something spooked a flock of birds feeding at the other end of the field and the men are popping caps like mad. Sometimes, I think the Boss is going to bury himself in a mountain of slim red and green shotgun shells. It's amazing how that man can shoot so fast, cuss so long, and kill so little. I believe dove hunting must have been invented for the man who just loves to sit in the fields, contemplate nature, and burn powder.*

*Oh, lost in thought when I should have been working. . . .*

I didn't notice until I crawled back into my little corn cave that the shadows are quite long and blue. The time seems to pass so quickly when I'm out in the fields with Bob and the Boss. All in all, it was a good day. There was lots of shooting and the birds felt warm and soft in my mouth. The Boss's hand crept back behind him once or twice and scratched my car so I know he has been proud of me today. As long as I'm in a mellow, satisfied mood, I suppose I'll make a confession. The Boss isn't really that bad a shot. But what language!



## VIRGINIA WILDLIFE

# CONSERVATIONGRAM

Commission Activities and Late Wildlife News . . . At A Glance

**BIG GAME TROPHY CONTESTS ANNOUNCED.** The Western Virginia Regional Big Game Trophy Contest, sponsored by the Harrisonburg-Rockingham County Izaak Walton League Chapter for the judging of deer or bear legally killed west of the Blue Ridge during the 1960-61 hunting season, was held October 12-14 at the Myers Armory in Harrisonburg. Winners of this contest will compete with winners of the Eastern Virginia Big Game Trophy Contest for state honors at the eastern contest after regional judging is completed. The eastern contest, sponsored by the Peninsula Sportsman's Association, will be held at 7:30 p.m. on Saturday, November 11, at the Circle Lane bowling alley meeting hall, Sinclair Circle, Military Road, Hampton. Contest chairman is E. N. Vandembree, 41 Sinton Road, Newport News.

**AMHERST COUNTY DEER CLOSED AREA TO BE OPENED.** The "deer closed area" on the Pedlar Ranger District of the George Washington National Forest will be opened to deer hunting during the coming hunting season. This 6,000-acre tract was established in 1953 on the east side of the Blue Ridge Parkway in Amherst County for the protection of the deer population. From the top of the mountain above Buena Vista the boundary line followed the Old Jordan Road 103, Route 60, the top of Long Mountain, Pedlar Lake, Little Irish Creek to the parkway, and along it back to the Jordan Route 103 above Buena Vista.

In 1953 and 1954, some 68 deer, trapped in Virginia, were released in the area as breeding stock. Hunting for game other than deer was allowed during this time, but no dogs could be used. In 1956 the restriction on the use of dogs was removed. Having the area open to hunting, especially with dogs, presented a problem of proper law enforcement to protect the deer. In the meantime, the deer have expanded their population and have moved into surrounding areas in sufficient numbers to make the closed area obsolete.

**CONSERVATION EDUCATION SPECIALIST JOINS GAME COMMISSION.** Dorothy E. Allen, formerly outdoor education instructor and assistant librarian at University High School, Ann Arbor, Michigan, has been employed by the Virginia Commission of Game and Inland Fisheries to serve as that agency's education officer, game commission education division chief M. Rupert Cutler has announced. Working out of the commission's Richmond office, Mrs. Allen will encourage the teaching of wildlife conservation in schools and youth organizations through contact with Department of Education, scouting, 4-H, FFA, and sportsman club leaders, write Virginia Wildlife magazine articles for teachers, edit that magazine's "Youth Afield" page, and coordinate the annual Wildlife Essay Contest. Other responsibilities of the new education officer include editing the Commission's personnel newsletter and serving as commission librarian.

Mrs. Allen was born in Mexico, Missouri, and obtained a teacher's certificate from Culver-Stockton College in Canton, Missouri, in 1940. She is a graduate of the U. S. Navy Aerographer's School in Lakehurst, N. J., has an education degree with science major from Oregon State College, and obtained her master's degree in conservation from the University of Michigan in June 1961. She has taught school in Missouri, Arkansas, and New Mexico, has worked as a stenographer, and has served as aerographer with the U. S. Marine Corps and meteorologist with the U. S. Weather Bureau in Alaska.



# The Goshen Wildlife Management Area

By JAMES W. ENGLE, JR.  
*District Game Biologist  
Swoope, Virginia*

**E**ARLY in the summer of 1960, the Virginia Commission of Game and Inland Fisheries purchased the land which makes up the Goshen Wildlife Management Area. It is a 16,000-acre, mountainous tract in the western part of Rockbridge County. If you are looking for a new hunting ground, rugged country not overrun with other hunters, then this is the place for you.

Access to this area is still a bit of a problem. On the west side along Route 780 (known locally as the Bratton's Run road), the Commission boundary does not come quite to the road, but national forest land does, and the national forest adjoins the Commission's tract. The U. S. Forest Service owns the mouth of the hollow where Gouchenour Branch crosses Route 780 and empties into Bratton's Run. A hunter access road across this national forest land can't be built until a decision is made as to whether or not the hollow will be developed as a recreation area, but if you have a jeep or truck, you can still travel the rough logging road the pulpwood operators used. You can get up to the foot of Bratton's Mountain, the western boundary of the Goshen wildlife area, this way, and there are many old logging roads and trails to walk in this section.

In Goshen Pass (Route 39) is a hollow known as Laurel Run. There is a rough, rocky road up this hollow which is not recommended for vehicles.

The best way to get into this area is on the Guys Run Trail off Route 39, three miles east of Goshen and two miles west of Goshen Pass. Let's take an imaginary trip up its 7.8-mile length. A short portion of this road crosses private land. Notice the signs, and please respect the landowner. The road itself, narrow and sandy, was repaired in the summer of 1961, and turnouts and parking places were established along its first four miles.

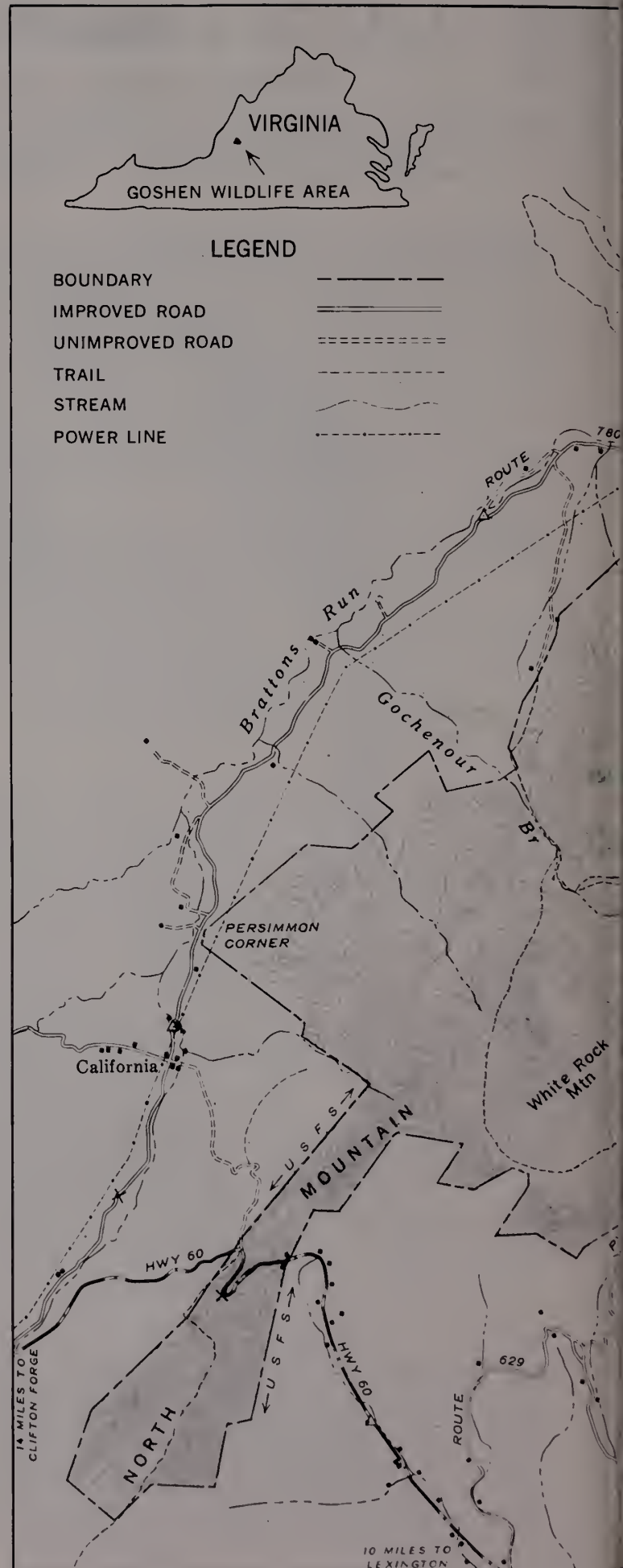
You will pass trails marked with wooden routed signs as you travel up the trail. The first of these is the Chinquapin Trail. It is about one mile long, to the west. A jeep can go back a part of the way. Next is Piney Mountain Trail, two miles long. Two miles from the gate is the Moore Camp Rock Trail, ¼-mile long to the west.

The next trail is the Meadow Ground Trail. You will have to walk this narrow, steep maintenance trail, as it is kept gated and locked. It is two and one-half miles long and will take you to the 100-acre private tract on top of the mountain known as the "Meadow Ground." The next trail is the Mohler's Loop Trail, and while it has been widened and lengthened to its present 1.7 miles, it is rough and rocky in places. If the weather is dry, it will be open during deer season, at least, but don't try your new automobile on it. At its end, you are right under the Meadow Ground, in real bear and deer country.

If you continue past the Mohler Loop Trail, you soon reach the ninth and last fording on Guys Run. A short spur to the right takes you to Carters picnic spot after passing the upper and lower Bibbs houses and the child's grave just a little way from the old chimney foundation. Soon you start up the mountain, and after two switchbacks you are at Hulls Gap. This is on the edge of private land. You will find the Commission boundary painted a bright yellow and signs along the line. (A nice hunt is out Hull's Mountain and down into Guys Run and to the car at the bottom of the mountain.)

Now you are 5.3 miles from Route 39 and looking down into Kerr's Creek, Route 60 and toward House Mountain. From here on, automobiles are not recommended. The road leads to Hogback Lookout Tower and is maintained by the Virginia Division of Forestry for its use during fire season. It is about 2.5 miles from Hulls Gap to the tower. It takes you through rock ledges, bear oak brush and bear country. The view down through Laurel Branch is one of the most magnificent in Virginia.

It would be interesting to walk from the top of this mountain out Laurel Run during hunting season. If you killed a bear, you would probably have to skin it out, cut it up and pack it out. This is some of the roughest country west of the Blue Ridge.











Commission Photo by Kesteloo

"Examine the bore, magazine and action of the weapon to be sure that they are free from obstructions and chance cartridges."

## Safe Practices For Safe Hunting

By JOHN A. BATLEY, JR.  
*Alexandria, Virginia*

**S**AFE hunting is a relative term: It is a sport neither completely safe nor prohibitively dangerous. It can be made safer through the concerted efforts of each individual who participates.

Direct cause of most hunting accidents is the weapon carried by the hunter. This causative agent is emphasized out of all proportion to its influence on the true origin of injuries and fatalities. In fact, the indirect (contributory) cause actually responsible for nearly all of these accidents has its roots firmly implanted in some individual; the weapon is merely the tool for establishing, beyond doubt, carelessness, ignorance, or lack of good judgment.

Conditions and circumstances leading to hunting accidents are well established. History and the facts associated with past incidents have produced clearly defined cause-patterns which recur year after year. Few, if any, of the current hunting season accidents will result from novel causes. Nearly all of the actual incidents, including the near-misses, can be predicted with reasonable accuracy to reflect one or more ancient but reliable cause-factors.

Much remains to be done to improve the relative safety of hunting as a sport and recreation. It appears doubtful that all of the potential hazards can be eliminated entirely. However, other things being equal, there can be no doubt, as the number of hunters who learn and apply common sense-safe practice rules increase, the number of hunting accidents will decrease.

The hunters' code of safe practice involves many things besides the weapons being carried. To know when and when not to shoot is most important. To recognize other unsafe conditions and take action to counteract the probable hazards are equally essential. Basically, effective safe-practice when hunting will include such things as:

1. Precautions to protect the individual from himself.
2. Restraining and preventive actions and habits to preclude injury to other persons.
3. Defensive safeguards to avoid being injured by other

persons and by *chance* exposure to potentially dangerous terrain or environment.

Reasons for the three fundamental elements comprising a sound safe-practice code for hunting are not difficult to understand. Most hunters, expert and tyro alike, will subscribe to the logic each element represents. What may not be so clearly understood is the importance of detailed implementation of the three elements to make them "work" effectively.

Certain specific safe-practice requirements will pertain to more than one of the three basic elements. Some are applicable and proper in all three. Others serve their purpose when restricted to one element only. In this connection, it should be fairly obvious that all of the possible circumstances that might arise under one or all of the essential elements cannot be anticipated. The myriad of combinations of circumstances, conditions, weapons, and people make it virtually impossible to prescribe safe-practice rules for every conceivable exposure. Learning and applying those safe-practice rules developed to prevent casualties from the usual causes, is to be forearmed to cope with unusual conditions.

**OF ELEMENT ONE:** Precautions to Protect the Individual from Himself.

1. Examine the bore, magazine and action of the weapon to be sure that they are free from obstructions and chance cartridges. To neglect this could result in injuries caused by premature firing of the supposedly empty weapon. The weapon could also rupture and cause injuries if the bore is "plugged" with a cleaning patch, mud, snow or grease.

2. Unload the weapon before placing it in a car or when entering the home or camp. Failure to unload the weapon could be the cause of accidents since it might fire accidentally, even with the safe "on," from severe jolting.

3. Always carry the weapon with its muzzle pointing away from you and in a safe direction. Weapons can be fired accidentally from involuntary pressures on the trigger when one stumbles or falls. Even when loading the weapon, keep its muzzle in a safe direction; they have been known to fire when the action is closed because of broken or faulty firing pins and sears.

4. Open the breech or unload the weapon if it becomes necessary to climb fences, climb trees or cross dangerous terrain. Falling and sliding on loose rocks, ice, snow or precipitous earth embankments has caused weapons to fire.

5. Examine with care the caliber and gauge of each shell or cartridge to be sure that it is the proper one for the weapon being used. Do not carry shells or cartridges of different caliber or gauge in the hunting coat at the same time; it is rather easy to inadvertently chamber the wrong size. Firing a weapon using incorrect ammunition could cause it to "explode" or rupture in a manner to inflict severe injury to the shooter.

6. Avoid the tendency to assert your right to be one of an over-population of hunters in good game cover. The more hunters there are in a given area the greater is the chance that your determination to "get a shot" may position you to receive it—but from one of the other hunter's weapons. It is more prudent to recognize the *chance* for being injured and withdraw to a safer place.

7. Become intimately familiar with the correct functioning and manipulation of the weapon being used. Be positive of the position where the *safe* actually locks the weapon; do not be required to test when the safe is "on" or "off" by putting pressure on the trigger.



8. Open the breech or bolt of the weapon when eating lunch or resting alone and when engaged in casual conversation with others. Lay the weapon on the ground or place it securely in such manner that it will retain its position.

9. When hunting, do not drink or be under the influence of intoxicants.

10. Before cleaning the weapon after use, examine the breech and magazine to be sure it is completely unloaded.

**OF ELEMENT TWO:** Restraining and Preventive Actions and Habits to Preclude Injury to Other Persons.

1. Be positive of your identification of targets before shooting. Dead limbs and twigs often resemble antlers on a deer; the fawn-colored body you see could be another hunter, so be positive your eyes are not playing tricks before you pull the trigger. Never shoot toward unusual forest *sounds* you interpret to be a moving deer or turkey; *see* the target first.

2. Refrain from shooting at large trees, particularly dead trunks, to observe where your rifle bullet or buckshot will strike. The side of the tree you do not see may be hollow and some hunter may be using it as a shield from the weather or as a "blind"; your trial shot could kill him.

3. Be alert to the locations of other hunters. Do not shoot toward them or within 45 degrees minimum of their direction of travel.

4. Know the ballistics and potential power and range of the weapons and ammunition being used. Do not underestimate their capability for causing injuries at seemingly fantastic ranges. There is need to realize that it is *possible* (though improbable in thick cover) for bullets and some shot pellets to miss completely all natural obstructions. They then can proceed with sufficient velocity to severely injure, if not kill, a person at distances thought to be out of range for killing game. Keep the following points in mind:

(a) A caliber .22 long rifle cartridge can be dangerous at one mile.

(b) Rifled slugs in shotguns, regardless of size—410 through 12 gauge—all have muzzle velocities of about 1600 feet per second and can be a serious hazard to humans at about 600 yards.

(c) Single pellets from a shotgun attain muzzle velocities in excess of 1100 feet per second whether fired from 12 gauge or 410 gauge guns. They can be projected as far as 300 yards. Remember, it is not more difficult to blind a person than to kill a quail.

(d) The rather common medium-power caliber .30-30 rifle can send its bullets as far as two miles.

(e) The well known caliber .30-06 Springfield rifle can project a bullet to three miles.

5. Never shoot at the surface of water, rocks and other hard surfaces. The bullets and shot, depending on angle of impact, could ricochet. Under these conditions their ultimate destination is unpredictable yet they retain sufficient power to seriously injure, perhaps kill, human beings. Military type ball ammunition for rifles is more dangerous in this regard than the sporting (game killing) variety.

6. Never point a weapon (loaded or empty) at another person. There is little solace for the victim or his heirs to be informed that you "did not know the weapon was loaded" or "that it was discharged accidentally."

7. Do not shoot across roads or highways and do not shoot toward houses, barns or outbuildings. Game of any kind is not worth the shot that, by chance, may penetrate

the structures and strike a person or domestic animal.

8. Always unload the weapon when it is left unattended and before entering automobiles, camps and dwelling places. Follow the same practice before placing the weapon in a gun rack. Unless this habit becomes a ritual, there may come a time when inquisitive people, children, and even dogs and cats will displace and let drop the loaded weapon. It may not, yet it could discharge.

9. Remain sober.

10. Target-in your weapons in a safe location to be sure (exactly) where they shoot. Sights can be tampered with or displaced by rough usage. Barrels of shotguns can be readily distorted. Changes in sight setting and methods of holding cause great variation from the intended point of impact.

**OF ELEMENT THREE:** Defensive Safeguards to Avoid Being Injured by Other Persons and by Chance Exposure to Potentially Dangerous Terrain or Environment.

1. Wherever practicable wear outer garments of a color readily distinguishable from game and other natural surroundings; this is almost a must for eastern deer and bear hunting. Red, yellow, orange and even a light blue are satisfactory. If camouflage or other outer clothing which blends with the cover being hunted is necessary, then it is incumbent on you to be aware of any other hunters in the area and to let your presence be known; they may not be known; they may not be as careful as you are.

2. Blue or red bandanna handkerchiefs are infinitely safer to use when hunting deer than a white one. There are a few circumstances where the use of a white handkerchief in the woods can be mistaken for a deer's flag (tail).

3. Dragging dead bear or deer out of the woods is safer than carrying them. There are still some hunters who may chance a shot at game in natural color when it is being carried. If you are determined to carry your trophy, make sure it is bedecked in a red or other colored covering.

4. Avoid approaching other hunters who are intent upon watching for or flushing and jumping game. Some few of these may be inclined to fast-trigger action when unexpectedly disturbed. If you must approach or pass nearby, let your presence be known.

5. Unload the weapon or open the breech when crossing a stream or bog on a narrow unstable log. You are not apt to kill game from such precarious footing and it's much safer to fall with a weapon that is not likely to be discharged in the process.

6. When hunting with several partners in an advancing line, establish and enforce the following ground rules as minimum safe practice:

(a) Keep the line straight.

(b) Keep the weapons pointing forward or nearly so—never pointed parallel to the line.

(c) Know where each individual of the party is located.

(d) Only the anchor (end) hunters of the line be permitted to about-face to fire at game which passes to the rear. These two hunters turn away from the line—not into it.

(e) No game shots to be taken unless the target is straight-away or within the approximate forward area enclosed by a 45 degree angle either side of the straight-away line, the anchor hunters being excepted for the game moving away from their end of the line.

7. Avoid hunting with others whose habits, ethics, and safe-practice code do not measure up.





Two of the 21 bull elk taken in Virginia's Giles County during the past three seasons: at left, a 14-pointer taken in 1958 by Hayden Blankenship of Narrows; at right, a 10-pointer taken in 1960 by Asa Rasnake of Bastian. State Game Warden Wayne Richardson is at far right.

## Hunting Virginia's Elk

Text and Photos by AL COTHMAN  
*Quinton, Virginia*

**E**LK hunting hadn't been allowed in Virginia's Giles County elk range for years, but this was November 1958, and elk season was to be opened there for two days on antlered bulls only. There was an estimated 250 to 300 elk ranging a 40,000-acre area, most of it in the Jefferson National Forest.

Aubrey Phillips of Richmond and I arrived in Pearisburg at 7:15 p.m. on Saturday. This little town had "Welcome Elk Hunter" signs in every store window in town. Within 15 minutes I had made friends with Jesse Shelton who operates a variety store in Pearisburg and has a farm that adjoins the national forest right in the elk range.

He showed Aubrey and me where the elk were ranging on his farm and arranged for us to spend Saturday night at his mother's house. We spent Sunday morning sighting in our rifles. Sunday afternoon Jess took us back up to the mountain where the elk had been seen that morning.

I asked Jesse if we could hunt there, and he gave us written permission. Aubrey and I had come prepared to camp out, so in order to be close to the elk range we asked if we could sleep in an old barn. Again Jess said O.K., and we moved our headquarters from Mrs. Shelton's house to the Shelton's barn, giving us a 20-mile advantage and placing us in sight of where we were going to hunt.

Aubrey and I cooked a snack on our Sterno stove, then bedded down in a manger. The old barn was sitting right beside the road and had a gate attached to it. We didn't get much sleep that night because every few minutes a carload of elk hunters would come through that gate.

The big day finally arrived. We could hardly see to fix breakfast because of the fog, but when we finished our Sterno eggs and the mud we called coffee, we took our flashlights and rifles and started up the mountain, taking different directions. The fog was so thick you couldn't see 50 feet, but the darkness was rapidly fading into daylight.

Suddenly I heard a rustle in the leaves. I froze. It was light enough now that I had pocketed my flashlight. As I stood motionless with my finger on the safety of my rifle, I saw something moving through the fog. It turned out to be a squirrel. As old bushy-tail hopped on his way, I continued

on up the mountain toward the big green field. While passing through a little oak ravine with a spring stream rippling over a path of rocks, I sat on a log to rest a minute. I heard something rustling in the leaves again, and as I looked around I saw chipmunks everywhere. There were thousands of the little animals running around in the leaves and squealing. I know they were unaware of my presence, for when I stood up to continue on my way, they vanished like magic.

I hadn't moved very far when several shots rang out not very far from me up the mountain. Had it not been foggy I could have seen this action taking place. Again I froze, because this could be a miss. It didn't take me long to know that fellow had taken an elk because he gave a yell that could be heard over the whole mountain range. I checked my watch—it was 7:15. I could hear them talking as I climbed on toward them. I wasn't far away, but I had a steep knoll to climb to get there. When I finally reached this lucky hunter, holding a .35 caliber rifle. I never had seen any animal as large as that in the woods anywhere. This elk had an enormous, perfect 14-point rack, and weighed over 1,000 pounds.

Hayden Blankenship was the happy hunter. His father and four brothers were hunting with him. They had been logging this area and had also been watching this big elk daily. Hayden said, "This old bull passed the same big rock every morning, so I decided I'd sit on top of the rock."

I helped the Blankenships get the elk down the mountain to a spot where they could reach him with a bulldozer they used in their logging operations.

Mr. Blankenship had been standing under an old apple tree. He told me that was a good spot and that I could have it, so I spent the rest of the first day's elk hunt there.

On the second and last day, we got up early but for some reason or other couldn't get things going right. Before we could get started day was breaking. We took off as fast as we could, but going uphill all the way is not the fastest going. I was headed for the apple tree and Aubrey was going to the big rock. We were almost there when a shot came from the direction we were heading. I really took off then, and when I reached the apple tree I was breathing so hard I didn't think I would ever catch my breath.

I could see two men about 500 yards away and could hear them talking. A fellow was approaching me around a knoll about 75 yards away. This fellow was loaded with information for me. He showed me where a huge royal elk (14 points) had passed just 50 yards from the apple tree. Any dreams I had of getting an elk were shattered. I couldn't resist taking a look at the elk I was too late for.

I met the fortunate hunter, R. J. Grenier of Alexandria, Virginia. He was using a .30-06 rifle.

There were 12 elk taken during the 1958 season.

In 1959 we were given a three-day season. The whole year long I planned on being under that apple tree when the next season opened. When the big day arrived, I quietly slipped under that old apple tree about 5:30 a.m. Just before it started getting light, flashlights began to appear everywhere and soon it seemed the mountain was being invaded by lightning bugs. A bull elk gave a bogle from the top of the mountain, followed by a blood-curdling yell of a wildcat.

As day started breaking, I heard a noise down a ravine from me. I strained my eyes to see, but it was still too dark.





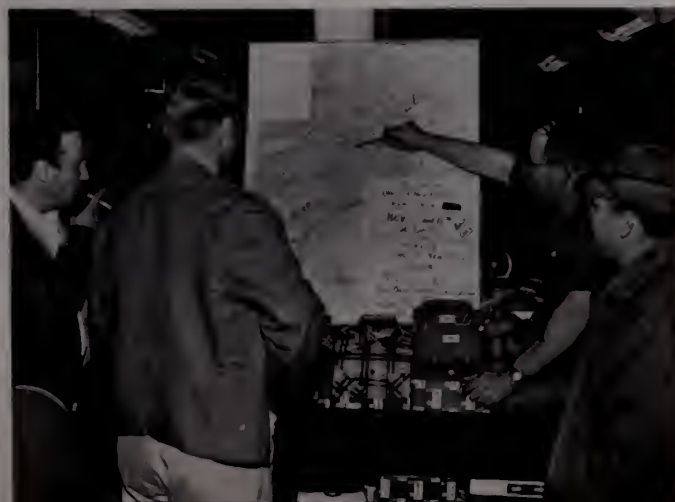
Elk hunters were assigned campsites by Jefferson National Forest personnel. Above, forester Bill Leichter checks in Verlin King of Bristol, Virginia. Below, Richmonders Don Umussig, Art Cauley, Teeny Dunvin and John Reed swap yarns in camp.



Below, Charlie Hood of Richmond is shown being served lunch by Mrs. Inez Woodyard at the store at White Gate in Giles County which also served as a big game checking station.



Below, Jesse Shelton, who operates a variety store in Pearisburg, shows hunters the best areas for hunting elk in the Jefferson National Forest.



A grouse exploded out of the ravine and alighted in a tree not far away, but I was after something bigger than a grouse.

Later in the day I found that the mass of hunters going up the mountain had forced the elk over the mountain ahead of them. This herd of elk stayed on the other side of the mountain in the thick of laurel bushes all three days. The only elk I know of that was taken near our area was in the Mill Creek valley on the other side of the mountain from where I was hunting. It was a 12-pointer taken with a .30-06 by Ted Summerville of Atlanta, Georgia.

Only six elk were killed during the 1959 season.

In 1960 I made a trip to Giles County six weeks before the elk season opened. Bill Jamison, the Giles County game warden, and I scouted the whole Jefferson National Forest for elk sign and a good place to hunt. Bill introduced me to two brothers named Miller, who own a big farm in the White Gate section.

The Millers were having trouble with the elk damaging their corn, and said I could hunt on their property when the season opened.

Charlie Hood, a representative of Winchester Arms Co., met me in Jesse Shelton's store in Pearisburg a couple of days before the season opened. Jesse and Ann boarded us without charge for this five-day period.

The first morning was here again. Jesse woke us at 3:30 a.m. and cooked us a big breakfast, then away we went to Miller's farm about 20 miles away.

We were there by 5:00 a.m. As we started up the mountain by way of the cornfield, we heard a CRASH . . . SMASH . . . THUMP. The elk were tearing up the mountain ahead of us.

Charlie went to the right and I went to the left. We continued on up to a field we had spotted the day before. About daybreak I heard an elk bleat near the top of the mountain, but I was too far away to see it.

I sat tight until about two hours after the sun came up, then started moving slowly and as quietly as possible up the mountain in hopes of getting close enough to a big bull elk to make him mine, but without any luck.

Later in the day Charlie and I got together back at the Miller's farm. From there we went to the White Gate checking station to get the latest elk news. There were rumors of one down in the national forest. To the forest we went. The first person we bumped into was game warden Wayne Richardson, who had just tagged a big 10-point elk for Asa Rasnake of Bastian, Virginia.

Rasnake works at the Bland County Correctional Farm and had been watching this big elk feeding for two months. At 7:10 a.m. this first morning of the season, he took his trusty old .32 Winchester Special, loaded it with seven 170-grain bullets, climbed the mountain, took a seat in the elk's path and BANG! When the smoke cleared he had a nice 10-point elk.

The next day I heard an elk running about 150 yards from me, but it was out of my sight. It sounded like a horse trotting and breaking sticks. This was as close as I got to an elk this third season. Three elk were taken, one a spike, the other a four-pointer, and the third the 10-pointer killed by Rasnake.

\* \* \* \* \*

There will be no open season on elk anywhere in Virginia in 1961, according to game commission regulations.





Using a map, State Game Biologist Johnny Redd of Powhatan (far left) and the state game warden for Amelia County, J. E. Allen, show club member Roger Bass and planting committee chairman Charles (Mickey) Maxwell (at right) where to locate wildlife plantings on the 3,056 acres along the Appomattox River leased by their group.

Fruits of the club's labor, in the form of annual game bird mixture milo seed heads, are shown by Thomas Goodman to his son, Thomas, Jr.



*In Virginia's Piedmont - - -*

## The Upland Hunters Association

A Photo Story  
By LEON G. KESTELOO  
*Audio-Visual Supervisor*



Club members Bass and Evans are shown preparing and seeding a wildlife food patch. The Upland Hunters Association, whose 35 charter members are all Richmond business and professional men, plants 70 acres of open land to wildlife food mixtures each year to increase the numbers of quail, rabbits, squirrels, turkeys and deer on the area.



Two old city buses were purchased in 1958 and placed on the property for use as a clubhouse. One is equipped with 12 bunks.



The other bus serves as kitchen and lounge. Here, J. F. Rice is shown pouring coffee for fellow club members aboard their bus-lounge.





Joe Holmes shows his wife and daughter where to watch for deer during the club's "dry run" hunt when the dogs are given a practice run in October. The families are put out on hunters' stands and prizes are awarded to the family which sees the most wildlife.



Everyone chips in to enter the "turkey shoots," which are held to raise funds for purchasing wildlife food planting materials. A half-dozen deer and a dozen turkeys, plus many rabbits and squirrels, are taken each year by Upland Hunters Association members on their well managed Amelia County tract.



As in all turkey shoots, the man whose shotgun pellet comes closest to the middle of the "X" on the target wins a turkey. Here, member Long checks his target. Members enjoy the opportunity the club provides to teach their young sons the sports of hunting and fishing, how to handle a gun and the fun of camping.



A good quantity of game is harvested on the association's land each year—John Epps' deer, shown here, for example.



Glenn Hamilton checks his fine gobbler with warden Allen, who gives successful hunters their official big game tags.





Commission Photos by Kesteloo

## A Brief History Of Virginia Wildlife Magazine

*And Its Predecessors*

By ANN E. PILCHER  
Education Division

Shown against a background of *Virginia Wildlife* magazines in the cover design used between June 1955 and December 1958 are J. J. Shomon, editor from 1948 through June 1961 (left) and M. R. Cutler, managing editor since 1958 and present editor.

VIRGINIA'S state wildlife conservation magazine has had an interesting and progressive history. One description wouldn't fit all the issues, for it has been published in different shapes and sizes and under several different names since 1920.

First forerunner of *Virginia Wildlife* was a 16-page magazine, approximately 7 by 10 inches, known as *The Virginia Conservationist*. The initial issue appeared in September 1920, carrying the following announcement:

"It is the purpose of the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries to issue *The Virginia Conservationist* bi-monthly. The object of the publication, which will be sent free, upon application, to citizens of Virginia, is to conduct and continue a campaign of education for the conservation of wild life in this State; to bring about a more cordial understanding between those who hunt and law-enforcing officials; to record the activities of the Department—all to the end of obtaining the sympathetic and active cooperation of law-abiding citizens in the enforcement of laws for the protection and propagation of game and game fish.

"The effectiveness of game protection and propagation laws depends on the interest and cooperation of the citizens of the State and the spirit of those who hunt and fish. To them *The Virginia Conservationist* appeals for assistance "to carry on" the great work ahead of it. If the publication is successful in convincing its readers that the wild life resources of the State are worth conserving and propagating, its effort will not have been in vain."

Published in Richmond through January 1922, the magazine obtained a readership of 3,000 under the direction of F. Nash Bilisoly, commissioner of the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries; M. D. Hart, secretary (known affectionately as "The Father of the Game Commission"); and R. T. Corbell, field secretary.

In 1922 Governor Trinkle appointed McDonald Lee to head the Department as commissioner. And in May of that year *The Virginia Conservationist* became the *Game and Fish Conservationist*, with Lewis W. Tyus as first editor in addition to his duties as supervisor of game wardens, fourth district. Not only was the name changed but the size

of the publication as well. It was enlarged, and the issues varied in dimension from 8½ by 11 inches to 9 by 12. Although *The Virginia Conservationist* had been distributed on a complimentary basis, individual issues of *Game and Fish Conservationist* sold for ten cents, one-year subscriptions for fifty cents. It remained a bimonthly publication. Circulation had climbed to 10,000 by spring of 1923, and a one-dollar subscription cost for two years was initiated in 1924. Later that year one dollar became the price for a three-year subscription. Advertising space was sold at five cents a word with a special rate for ads to buy and sell dogs. If the text included 25 words, the advertiser paid only one dollar, plus four cents for each additional word. Cash was necessary with all orders. Since 1927, however, no advertising has been used except for promotion of the magazine itself.

In contrast to today's all male law enforcement division, an interesting photo in the March-April 1923 *Game and Fish Conservationist* depicted Mrs. B. M. Miller and Mrs. C. E. Sykes in uniform and described them as efficient lady wardens of Norfolk County who watched the markets and trains for signs of "bootlegging" of game and fish. In this same issue, the anniversary number, editor Tyrus noted that "Under this administration the magazine has made a notable success—chiefly in the aid rendered to the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries in cultivating a wholesome public sentiment and regard for the game, fish and dog laws of the Commonwealth."

In 1926 McDonald Lee was succeeded by Harry Houston as commissioner. But in 1926 also, the Virginia Legislature reorganized the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, severing its connection with the Commission of Fisheries and abolishing the office of ex-officio commissioner (who was also chief of the Commission of Fisheries). While the principal object of both agencies was conservation, their specific objectives were not similar—the former existing to encourage and foster the recreational field sport of hunting and fishing and the latter to encourage and foster an industry furnishing a food supply sold in the markets of the United States.



The Department exercised jurisdiction over game and game fish in fresh-water streams and ponds; the Commission of Fisheries, jurisdiction over commercial fisheries, such as oysters, crabs and fin fish in tidal waters.

The Department of Game and Inland Fisheries became the Commission of Game and Inland Fisheries and was placed in the hands of its own five-man commission appointed by Governor Byrd. Major A. Willis Robertson, author of the act which ten years before, in 1916, had created the State Game Department, became chairman of the Commission and administrative head of the organization.

Editorial helm of the magazine was transferred in the spring of 1930 to Herbert K. Job, author and photographer of wildlife, who was assisted by Charles O. Handley, superintendent of game propagation. The bimonthly *Game and Fish Conservationist* continued through 1931 for the purpose of "Conservation of Wild Life Through Education," varying in length during this period from 20 to 28 pages. Mr. Handley edited the final issue—November-December 1931. Publication of Virginia's state wildlife conservation magazine was discontinued at this time and was not resumed in any form until September 1937.

In 1933 Major Robertson relinquished his post to become a member of the House of Representatives; Carl H. Nolting, well-known Virginia sportsman and former member of the House of Delegates, was appointed to succeed him.

Then in September 1937 *Virginia Wildlife* came into being. Although now published under a different name, it was, nevertheless, a continuation of the state conservation magazine begun in 1920 as *The Virginia Conservationist* and published for nine years as the *Game and Fish Conservationist*. A monthly publication, it sold for 25 cents a year or 50 cents for three years. C. F. DeLaBarre edited the bulletin, which was published in Blacksburg as a cooperative undertaking of the Virginia Commission of Game and Inland Fisheries and the Virginia Wildlife Federation. It marked the beginning of the educational program of the Virginia Wildlife Conservation Council, cooperative agency made up of one representative each from the Virginia Wildlife Federation and the Virginia Commission of Game and Inland Fisheries. In January 1938 the Council was renamed the Virginia Conservation Education Council.

The cooperative agreement between the Commission and the Federation was terminated by mutual consent in July 1940 and, with the Autumn issue, 1940, *Virginia Wildlife* became a "quarterly" magazine published exclusively by the Virginia Commission of Game and Inland Fisheries. The appearance of what had been a modest little bulletin for three years, more like a news letter, completely changed. From an eight-page, 8½ by 11 publication, it shrank to 6 by 8¾ inches but expanded to 48 pages, on glossy stock.

Still working in Blacksburg, Mr. DeLaBarre, assisted by James F. McIneer, Jr., edited the Autumn 1940, Winter 1940-41, and June 1941 issues. Subscriptions were priced at 25 cents a year; single copies, 10 cents. Editorial direction of the Fall-Winter 1941-42 issue was taken over by Mr. McIneer, who later moved his office to Richmond with publication of the Spring-Summer 1942 magazine. When Mr. McIneer entered military service, Henry S. Mosby, acting superintendent of game for the Commission of Game and Inland Fisheries, became editor for the Fall-Winter 1942 magazine. Then *Virginia Wildlife* rested, with publication discontinued until World War II had ended.

by legislative act on July 1, 1942. The former commissioners

The Commission's administrative structure was revamped were replaced with a new commissioner from each of the nine congressional districts, appointed by Governor Darden. William S. Snow was elected chairman and Talbott E. Clarke was named executive director. Judge Snow headed the Commission for two years.

A member of the Commission since appointment in 1926, Beverley W. Stras, Jr., was elected chairman in July 1944 and continues today to give competent, experienced leadership in the conduct of affairs of the self-supporting state organization. The Commission has numbered ten men since July 1, 1953, after Virginia's redistricting in 1952.

Americans were preparing to celebrate the first anniversary of the end of World War II about the time publication of *Virginia Wildlife* was resumed: July 1946. With offices in Richmond, Clyde P. Patton became editor of the "monthly magazine for higher standards of outdoor recreation through wildlife conservation." Once more its appearance was altered. The magazine contained 24 pages, including covers, was 8½ by 11½ inches in dimension, and sold for \$1.00 per year, \$1.50 for two years. A three-year price of \$2.00 was made available to subscribers in 1948.

Former commissioner of the Alabama Conservation Department I. T. Quinn replaced T. E. Clarke as executive director of the Game Commission in September 1946. He served ably until retirement in July 1958, and Chester F. Phelps assumed the directorship after 20 years with the game division of the Commission, 18 of these as chief.

An early supporter of the conservation magazine, Mr. Phelps won the 1940 contest to name a section of the publication which carries short conservation news items of state and national importance. Following his suggestion, the page became known as "The Drumming Log" and is still a regular feature of *Virginia Wildlife*.

Not only the Commission but the magazine received new leadership. Joseph J. Shomon, associate editor for several months under Mr. Patton, became editor in April 1948 and undertook direction of the newly organized education division as its chief. During his editorship, *Virginia Wildlife* gained a reputation as a quality magazine both for its content and appearance. In 1954 it received from the Izaak Walton League of America the distinction of being named "best state conservation magazine in the nation." Another honor for quality production was awarded the magazine by the American Association for Conservation Information.

Conservation education in general in Virginia took running strides forward under Dr. Shomon's leadership, which lasted through June 15, 1961. At this time he assumed responsibilities as director of the newly created Nature Centers Division of the National Audubon Society in New York, and M. Rupert Cutler became division chief and editor.

The 8¾ by 11¾ publication presently has a circulation of about 38,000. Subscriptions are priced at \$1.50 for one year; \$3.50, three years; or 20 cents per single copy. In 1958 the Commission agreed to pay a nominal rate for certain articles used in *Virginia Wildlife* magazine. Heretofore, all article contributions had been gratis. Dedicated to conservation of Virginia's wildlife and related natural resources, and to the betterment of outdoor recreation in Virginia, the state's conservation publication has tried to fulfill its purpose as written in September 1920 and which, for all intents, is still today's reason for publication.

## Bird of the Month:

By DR. J. J. MURRAY

*Lexington, Virginia*

# The Great Horned Owl



THE call of the great horned owl from the deep woods is one of the wildest sounds still left to us in our too civilized country. It has a quality that never fails to stir the listener who is in tune with the wilderness. "Whoowhoo-who-who," two longs and two shorts, is the usual rhythm, all of the notes deep and resonant, like the lower notes of a cello.

This huge owl is still common in Virginia wherever there are big woods. With the bullfrogs and the weird laughter of the barred owls, it forms the bass section in the symphony of the Dismal Swamp. Here it abounds; and here in the gloom of the great gums and maples it can be heard even at midday. In our mountain forests, where it has good hunting grounds, it is common. Almost anywhere in the State where thick woods are left an occasional pair may be found.

The farmer, particularly if he is a poultry raiser, has strong feelings about this bird, and with some reason. There is no question that the great horned owl is a killer, and one powerful enough to take even a full-grown hen. Still, there are two things to be said. For one thing, most poultrymen have learned, not only for the protection of their flocks but also for the sake of better quality in the fowls, to keep the birds under cover most of the time, certainly at night. For another, this big owl is of considerable value to the farmer in killing rats, weasels, and other eaters of eggs and other produce. Beyond all this, however, the place of this great predator in our wildlife is such a picturesque one that it will be a sad day when there are no horned owls to hoot in the darkness. At our Rockbridge cabin their calls that come to us from the mouth of Whistle Creek express the very spirit of the lonely Maury River.

After all, the favorite food of the great horned owl is not poultry but, whatever we may think of its tastes, the lowly skunk. The white band on the skunk's back, which warns other enemies away in the dusk, is for the owl a signal to attack. I do not think I have ever handled a dead horned owl that did not carry the scent of this delicacy.

This owl is a powerful bird, the most powerful indeed of all our Virginia birds. It will attack and capture anything smaller than a fox. Its talons, pulled by the strong leg muscles, are like steel hooks. I have often told the tale, well authenticated to me by a Valley farmer, of an owl that was found caught in a fence with a steel trap on each foot. Twice caught by this farmer but by traps with rusty chains, it had twice broken loose, but had been able even so handicapped to continue to hunt for several weeks until finally one of the chains had hung in a fence.

The great horned owl is our earliest nester, sometimes even laying its two or three rounded white eggs in late January. Such early nesting is necessary because of the long helplessness of the young. It takes four weeks for the eggs to hatch and another six or eight weeks before the young can fly. The eggs are sometimes laid in a hollow in a tree but more often in an old nest of an eagle or hawk or crow. Once in Florida one was found built in the sticks in the side of an occupied nest of a pair of bald eagles.





Edited by DOROTHY ALLEN

### Pointers for Junior Riflemen

Now that the hunting season is here, many of you will follow in your fathers' footsteps and take up the sport of hunting. When you go hunting, be sure you know what constitutes good hunting and sportsmanship. J. N. Kerrick, the Game Commission's safety training officer, stresses that *every hunter should respect the rights of the landowner*. If a field or patch of woods is posted, go to the landowner and ask for permission to hunt on his property. In most cases the landowner will cooperate and give his permission. Only hunt where you are given permission.

Do not hunt close to buildings or livestock. Do not shoot up signs or other objects just for the sake of shooting. There are supervised firing ranges that are built for this purpose. Do not leave a gate open so the farmer's livestock will get out.

Be sure of your target. Just because the brush moves or you see an object that resembles game, don't pull up and shoot. Be sure you have the proper ammunition for your gun. Dress for the weather, and above all be a sportsman at all times. Your conduct in the field will reflect on every hunter. If you don't act like a gentleman, the landowner will never ask you to come back, and he will refuse those that follow you.

Remember, hunting is a privilege, not a right. Our forefathers placed such high value on firearms that they wrote in our Constitution a provision that the right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed upon. If you are going hunting, it is your duty to be sure you know enough about guns to handle one safely.

### Seasons and Bag Limits

Some animals cannot be hunted in Virginia. We say there is "No open season" on them. What are they, and why are they protected? Make a list of the game birds and game mammals which are completely protected by law in Virginia.

### The White-Tailed Deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*)

The deer is the most abundant of all big game animals and was the principal article of food for the Indians and our own pioneers. Many young riflemen in our Nation's early days acquired their skill as marksman while hunting deer.



Commission Photo by Kesteloo

A young Virginia white-tailed deer buck.

Harvesting the annual crop of deer is a big industry itself. When deer populations are too high, deer eat most of the forest reproduction before it has a chance to grow up. The management of the deer herd and the forests on a sustained yield basis is a difficult problem.

Consult natural history and game management books on the habits and ecology of the deer. When you go hunting, in what kind of habitat would you look for deer? What are the food and cover requirements of deer? Under natural conditions, what are natural enemies of deer? In what way are deer predators useful to the deer herd?

### Deer Tracking

After a light rain locate and follow deer tracks. You will not only learn the deer's habits, but, if you will also observe the partially-eaten shrubs on the deer trail, you may learn what type of food they eat.

### Checking Stations

Immediately upon killing a bear, deer or turkey, you must detach the appropriate tab from your bear-deer-turkey license and attach it to the kill, then take the carcass to an official checking station where the license tab will be exchanged for an official game tag.

These tags are very important in our game research activities, for trends in populations are shown by the legal harvests year after year. Fortunately, for the past several years in Virginia, the populations of deer and turkey have been on the increase.

The game tags filled out by the checking station operators and other data obtained at checking stations give our researchers much valuable information. For instance, the jaw opener, an instrument inserted in a white-tailed deer's mouth, is used to pry open the jaw to allow the biologist to examine the deer's teeth. By the amount of wear found on the teeth, the biologist can determine the age of the deer. Our biologists are able to age deer from six months of age up to ten years of age.

Blood collected from the deer during the harvest season is analyzed for various diseases such as brucellosis. Our Virginia deer are notably free of domestic diseases of this type, but some evidence has shown up through this type of research.

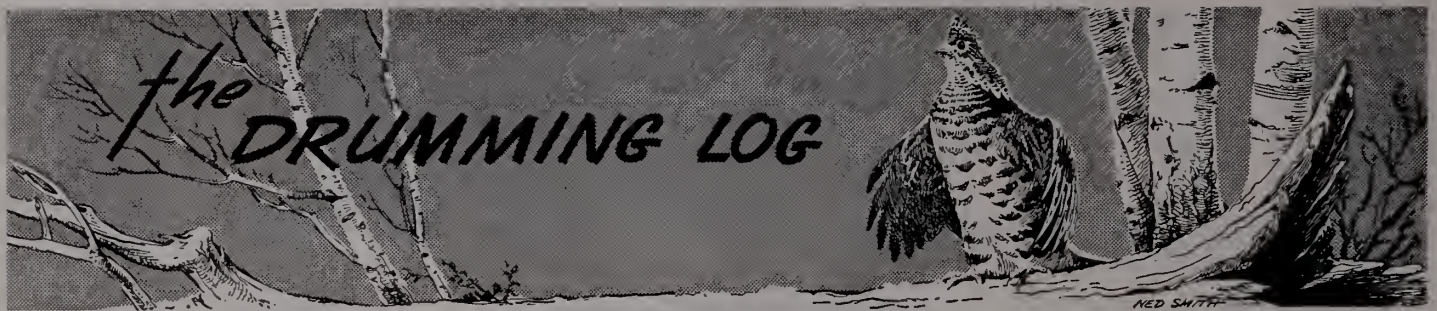
Be sure to "check in" at the checking station. Not only is it required by law, but it is important for us to have your cooperation in our research projects so we can provide you with good hunting in Virginia.

### Hunting Project

Make a calendar of hunting seasons for all game species in your county. Locate in your county publicly owned lands open to hunting. Consult your local game warden, county agricultural agent or district forester if you are not sure of these lands in your community.

Refer to the *Summary of Virginia Game Laws—1961-1962 Season*, free from the Game Commission or from any licenses agent, for the hunting laws.





### Multiple Use of Sherando Recreation Area Planned

A. H. Anderson, supervisor of the George Washington National Forest, has announced plans for new management features at Sherando Lake Recreation Area that will benefit sportsmen.

Sherando Lake Area will be open free of charge April 1 to May 15. From May 15 until after Labor Day, any fisherman entering that area will pay the usual entrance charge and, if he has a boat, the dock charge. During the period after Labor Day and until the week of big game season, the area will be kept open to fishermen. There will be no entrance charge during this period. During the week of big game season, the camping area will be open to hunter use free of charge.

Plans have been made to relocate the road going up Back Creek to the lower dam. This road will be on the south side of the creek. A small parking area will be constructed just below the dam. The road and parking area can be used by fishermen without entering the Recreation area and paying the entrance fee. Appropriate signs are to be installed along the trail around the lake informing fishermen not to proceed beyond that point to charge area.

### What Will It Weigh?

This table shows how much a dressed deer weighed when it was alive with the additional weight of its internal organs.

Dressed Wt.*	Live Wt.	Dressed Wt.*	Live Wt.
40	55	130	165
50	65	140	180
60	80	150	190
70	90	160	205
80	105	170	215
90	115	180	230
100	130	190	240
110	140	200	255
120	155	210	265

\*Weight is in pounds



Members of the University of Richmond Rifle Club who became NRA Certified Rifle Marksmanship Instructors at the instructor school conducted at the university in May: front row, from left: Robert E. Watkins, Robert Myers, Jr., Gordon E. Hamlet, Robert G. Gibby, Jr.; center: J. W. Courtney, Jr., NRA Training Counselor; back row, from left: Allan K. Yung, Ronald C. Payette, Capt. Laurance R. Hawkins, Frank T. Hanenkrat and M/Sgt. Woodley J. Koonce.

### National Forest Personnel News

A. H. Anderson, supervisor of the George Washington National Forest, has announced the appointment of Donald Potter to the newly-created position of recreation landscape architect.

Potter is a Syracuse graduate, having majored in Recreational Planning in the College of Forestry, and is a native of Corning, New York.

Richard G. Leverty recently transferred to the regional office of the National Park Service from his position



Dixie L. Shumate, Jr., fish research biologist with the Virginia Commission of Game and Inland Fisheries since July 1, 1953, resigned his state position on September 22 to accept employment as trout culturist with the Virginia Trout Company of Monterey, Virginia. Shumate, 30 years old and a V.P.I. graduate, specialized in the development of uniform record-keeping procedures for the Commission's hatcheries.

as forester on the Dry River District.

Charles N. Hodgson has been transferred from his assistant ranger position on the Dry River District, Bridgewater, to a staff assistant position in the supervisor's office in Harrisonburg.

### Discount Deer as Reservoir of Brucellae

White-tailed and mule deer should be discounted as a significant reservoir of brucellosis, according to results of a national survey reported recently by Dr. L. D. Fay of the Michigan Department of Conservation.

The study revealed the spread of the disease from deer to livestock to be insignificant, he said.

As conspicuous, free-ranging ruminants frequenting livestock pasturing areas, deer have long been suspected of transmitting brucellosis to cattle. The disease causes an estimated yearly loss of \$100 million through reduced milk production and loss of calves.

Dr. Fay conducted a letter survey of 32 states engaged presently in making serological tests for brucellosis in deer. Replies showed that of nearly 17,000 white-tailed and mule deer tested, only 20 white-tailed deer would be considered infected if the results of the tests were interpreted in the same manner as for cattle. The percentage of reactors in individual states ranged from none in 14 states to approximately 0.6 percent in two states.

The Michigan conservationist noted the highest incidence of reactors was among deer in the southeastern states. "It may be significant," he commented, "that these same states have lagged behind in the current national brucellosis program." Transmission of the disease also is less likely where cattle are dispersed, as on the open range, he added.

From the present data, Dr. Fay said, "I believe we are justified in concluding that brucellosis is a comparatively rare disease in deer of the United States, and that it is an unimportant disease from the standpoint of the health of the deer, or deer as a reservoir of infection to livestock.

—Veterinary Dispatch





Edited by JIM KERRICK

### Whose Responsibility Is It?

Inasmuch as the Commission of Game and Inland Fisheries has been given the responsibility of administering the boating safety law in Virginia, it is the policy of the Commission to encourage its game wardens to learn boating safety through courses offered by the American Red Cross, the Power Squadrons and the Coast Guard Auxiliary Flotillas as well as at special warden training sessions.

Boating safety is not only the responsibility of the game wardens, however, but also of every individual who owns and operates a boat. Experts have searched for years for new ways to tell boaters how to stay afloat and alive. The do's and don'ts of safe boating are simple, yet if some of them should interfere with the skipper and his sport, he will discard them. It is when skippers think there is plenty of room on the water and no danger that the accidents happen. When asked how the accidents happened, most likely the skippers' replies will be, "It was something that could not happen"; yet it did. Common sense and courtesy must be used afloat at all times.

### Five-Minute Boat Check

The secret of success in keeping your outboard rig shipshape with a minimum of extra work, according to the Mercury outboard people, is to keep ahead of the work by performing your upkeep chores a little at a time, perhaps five or 10 minutes before and after every use.

While waiting for guests to arrive, clean the windshield and forward deck, check all fittings for tightness and unkink any lines which may have become tangled last time out. Examine bumper tie line and life jackets at this time. Working your way back along the hull, check all controls at the helm and then load distribution on your own craft, and then experiment by shifting one person at a time slightly forward or aft to note whether such change in trim



Mercury Photo

Proper equipment should be a part of every boating rig. The recommended items shown on the pier include: paddle, boat hook, extra line, flashlight, extra propeller, bilge pump, flares, fire extinguisher, first aid kit, life preservers, horn, boat fenders, anchor, life jackets and radio.

has a good or bad effect on speed, comfort and handling qualities.

### Good Seamanship Means Safety

Safety on the water is a matter of common sense and a little foresight, says E. R. Klammer, accident prevention director of Allstate Insurance Companies.

Always carry life preservers on a small craft, he advises. They are re-



Know what to do in an emergency.

quired by law and common sense alike. Use only a Coast Guard approved type, preferably orange colored for better visibility. See to it that everyone on board has one. Small children should keep life vests or jackets on at all times.

The "man overboard" emergency requires fast action. You should know exactly what to do whenever you are faced with this emergency. A moment's hesitation or lack of knowledge on your part may mean the difference between life and death.

The first thing to do is to throw out

a marker, then circle around for the pick up. Throw a line to the victim, if he's too far away to reach. Help him grasp the edge of the boat, then balance the boat until he can climb aboard the bow or stern.

Develop techniques to prevent capsizing. Always head into high waves or the wake of another boat at an angle. Also avoid starting the motor when the rudder is in a turned position.

### Boat Accident Causes

Fewer boat accidents took place in Virginia from January through September 1961 than during the same period of 1960. The greatest reason for accidents was carelessness by the boaters. Reports filed with the Commission this year listed the following causes:

- Skier misjudged distance of other boat.
- Wind and rough water.
- Heart attack.
- Raw gas or gas fumes in the bilges.
- Panic.
- Too much speed.
- Standing up in boat.
- Negligence and lack of sense.
- Unlighted buoy.
- Obstruction in water.
- Not following the rules of the road.
- Static electricity or lightning.
- Stuck throttle.
- Heavy seas.
- Boat overloaded.
- Vision obscured.
- Use of intoxicants.
- Failing to pay attention to course.


### Auxiliary Flotilla Plans February Boating Class

Jack Lacy, Commander of Coast Guard Auxiliary Flotilla 51 in Richmond, has announced that Flotilla 51 will hold a boating safety class beginning in February. A definite schedule will be announced soon.

### Remember The Three R's of Boating

Remember your "three R's" in boating. Red buoys mark the Right side of the channel Returning to the pier.





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